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The Heir Presumptive and the Heir Apparent.

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OF CARLINGFORD," "NEIGHBOURS ON THE GREEN,"
"KIRSTEEN," etc., etc.

CHAPTER I.

LORD FROGMORE was about sixty when his step-brother, John Parke, his heir presumptive, announced to him one day his desire to marry. John was thirty-five, the son of another mother, with whom, however, Lord Frogmore had always lived in the best intelligence. A more indulgent elder brother could not be. He had never himself married, or even thought of doing so, so far as anybody knew. He had considered John's interests in everything. Had he been his father instead of his elder brother he could not have been more thoughtful. Whether perhaps it was John's advantage he was thinking of when he remained unmarried was another matter, though you would have supposed that was the elderly peer's only notion to hear how John's mother spoke of it. At all events it was very much to John Parke's advantage. His creditors did not press him, his tailor and he were the best friends in the world, everything was in his favour in life, and in London, where even his little extravagances were greatly encouraged and smiled upon. "Heir presumptive, the Honourable John Parke:" that one line in the "Peerage" made life very smooth for John.

Lord Frogmore was not, however, so entirely actuated by consideration for his brother as his stepmother thought. He was a man who took, and had taken all his life, very great care of himself. Whatever was his reason for not marrying, it was not on account of his brother John. No doubt he was aware that in all probability his brother would be his heir, but he did not dwell

on that thought, or indeed contemplate the necessity of an heir at all. He took great care of his health, which was perfect, and had a system of life which secured him the utmost possible comfort and pleasure with the least possible trouble. A man who has no family to interfere with his liberty, plenty of money, perfect control of his own time and actions, and no duties to speak of, can make himself exceedingly comfortable when he sets his mind to it, and this was what Lord Frogmore had done.

He was, however, a little startled but much more amused when John announced to him his intentions. It was at the beginning of the season, before as yet Mr. Parke could have been endangered by any of the blandishments of society, and Lord Frogmore's mind, which was a very lively one, made a sweep over the country houses at which he knew his brother to have been staying. "Do I know the lady?" he asked with a twinkle in his eye. He had not a very high opinion of his brother John, in point of intellect at least, and he immediately leapt to the conclusion that it was not John's intention so much as the lady's which had decided this important step.

"I don't think so," said John. "She is of a good family, but very fond of the country, and they don't come much to town. She is a Miss Ravelstone, of Grocombe—Yorkshire people—perhaps you may never even have heard the name."

"No, I can't say I have ever heard the name," said Lord Frogmore, with his face lengthening: for there is this unconscious arrogance in people who belong to what is called society that it seems to them as if it was the same as not to exist at all, if you are not at once recognized and identified by the mention of your name.

"No," said John, with something of a blush, "I did not expect you would. Her father has got a nice little estate, but they don't much mind society. There's several brothers. I don't suppose I shall have very much money with her. They're chiefly a hunting family," John said.

"Well, that is no harm. But it's a pity if there is no money," said Lord Frogmore calmly. "You have not money enough yourself to make you independent of that. What do you mean to do?"

Lord Frogmore looked with great composure at John, who in his turn looked very blank at his brother. John was very much

more warmly conscious of being Frogmore's heir than Frogmore was. He had taken it for granted, though not without cold sensations, that Frogmore would do something, nay, much for him in this emergency. The old gentleman would feel that John was fulfilling a duty to the common family which he himself (thank Heaven!) had never taken the trouble to do. John felt indeed that Frogmore ought to be grateful to him for marrying, which was clearly a duty, as he was almost the last of the race. Lord Frogmore saw through this with very lively perceptions, but it amused him to play a little on his brother's fears.

"You will wish to get an appointment of some sort or another," he said. "It is a thing not very easy to get, but still we must see what can be done for you. But I don't know how you are to pull through those examinations which are necessary for everything, John."

John kept silence for a time with a very disconcerted countenance, then he burst forth almost with an explosion. "I thought you would have been pleased, Frogmore——"

"I am not displeased: you are old enough to judge for yourself, and to choose for yourself. Of course, I am delighted that you should be happy," said Lord Frogmore with his bland smile which always took the fortitude out of John. But when he had reduced the poor fellow almost to a jelly, and made his purpose and his prospects look equally impossible, which was not difficult to do, the elder brother relented: or else it would be better to say he did for John what he had always intended to do, notwithstanding that he could not resist the temptation of turning him outside in. He inquired into the antecedents, or rather into the family of Miss Ravelstone, for she had no antecedents, happily for herself—and discovered that there was at least nothing against them if they were scarcely of the caste of those who usually gave heirs to Frogmore. Her father was a squire in Yorkshire though but of small estate, whose family had been Ravelstones of Grocombe long before the Parkes had ever been heard of. Unfortunately ancient family does not always give refinement or elevation either of mind or manners, and horses, though most estimable animals and the favourite pursuit of the English aristocracy, have still less influence of that description. Horses were the devotion, the vocation, and more or less the living of the Ravelstone family. From father to son all the men

of the house were absorbed in the cultivation, the production, the worship of that noble animal. Women there were none in the house save Miss Letitia, who was only so far of the prevailing persuasion that she was an admirable horsewoman. But in her heart she never desired to see a horse again so long as she lived. She had heard them talked of so long and so much that she hated the very name. The stable talk and the hunting talk were a weariness to her. Her mind was set on altogether different things. To get into society and to make some sort of figure in the world was what she longed for and aspired to. The county society was all she knew of, and that was at first the limit of her wishes. But these desires rose to higher levels after awhile as will hereafter be seen. She had as little prospect of admission into the elevated society of the county as she had of access to the Queen's court at the moment when kind fate called her forth from her obscurity.

This happened in the following way. A very kind and good-natured family of the neighbourhood, one of the few county people who knew the Ravelstones, had as usual a party for the Doncaster races. It was not a good year. There were no horses running which excited the general expectation, nothing very good looked for, and various misfortunes had occurred in the Sillingers' usual circle. Some were ill and some were in mourning, and some had lost money—more potent reasons for refraining from their usual festivities than the buying of oxen or even the marrying of wives—and the party at Cuppland was reduced in consequence below its usual numbers. It was then that Lady Sillinger, always good-natured, suggested to her daughters that they should ask "Tisch"—which was the very unlucky diminution by which Letitia was known. Poor Tisch had few pleasures in life. She had no mother to take her about—hardly even an aunt. She would enjoy the races for their own sake, the family being so horsey—and she could come in nobody's way. The Sillinger girls were young and pretty and careless, quite unconcerned about the chance of any one coming in their way, and very sure that Tisch Ravelstone was the last person in the world to fear as a rival. They agreed to the invitation with the utmost alacrity. Poor Tisch never went anywhere. They were as pleased to give her a holiday as if it had been of some advantage to themselves. And Letitia came, much excited and very grateful,

with one new dress and something done to each of the old ones to make them more presentable. The result was not very satisfactory among all the fresh toilettes from London and Paris which the Sillingers and their friends had for the races, but Letitia had the good sense to wear dresses of subdued colours which were not much remarked. She was not pretty. She had light hair without colour enough in it to be remarkable, and scanty in volume—hair that never could be made to look anything. Her nose was turned up a little at the tip, and was slightly red when the weather was cold. Her lips were thin. She herself was thin, with an absence of roundness and softness which is even more disadvantageous than the want of a pretty face. She was said by everybody to be marked out for an old maid. So it may easily be perceived that Lady Sillinger was right when she said that poor Tisch would come in nobody's way.

On the other hand, John Parke was a very eligible person, highly presentable, and Lord Frogmore's heir presumptive, a man about town who knew everybody and who never could have been expected in the ordinary course of affairs to be aware of the existence of such a homely person as Tisch Ravelstone. He did not indeed notice her at all except to say good-morning when they met, and good-night when she joined the procession of ladies with candlesticks going to bed, until the third day. On that fatal morning, before the party set out for the Races, Mr. Parke had an accident. He twisted his foot upon the slippery *parquet* of the breakfast-room, which was only partially covered by the thick Turkey carpet: and though the twist was supposed not to be serious it prevented him from accompanying the party. He was very much annoyed by this *contretemps*, but there was nothing for it but to submit. Before Lady Sillinger set out for Doncaster she had everything arranged for his comfort, so far as it could be foreseen. He was put on a sofa in the library, with a table by his elbow covered with all the morning papers, with the last English novels out of Mudie's box, and the last yellow books from Paris which had reached the country. There was an ink-stand, also a blotting-book, pens and pencils—everything a disabled man would be supposed to want. "I would stay to take care of you," said kind Lady Sillinger, "but Sir Thomas——"

"Oh, don't think of such a thing," said John. "I shall be very comfortable." They all came to pity and console him before

they drove away—the girls in their pretty dresses, the men all spruce and fresh. He felt it a little hard upon him that after having been invited specially for the Races he should have to stay at home, and he felt very angry with the silly fashion, as he thought it for the moment, of those uncovered floors and slippery polished boards. "What the blank did people have those things for?" he said to himself. Still he did his best to grin and bear it. He settled himself on his sofa and listened to the distant sounds of the setting off, the voices and the calls to one and another. "Tom will come with us——" "No, but I am to have the vacant place in the landau." "Oh, now, Dora, there is room for you here." Dora was the youngest of the Sillingers and the one he liked best. He wondered with whom she was to be during the drive. There was another vacancy besides his own. One of the ladies had stayed behind as well as himself. He wondered which it was. If it was Mrs. Vivian, for example, he wished she would come and keep him company, But, perhaps, it was some horrid cold or other which would make her keep her bed.

The sound of their departure died away. They had all gone. No chance of any one now coming into the room to deliver John Parke from his own society. He would have to make up his mind to spend his day alone. With a deep sigh, which nearly blew the paper which he held so carelessly out of his hand, John betook himself to his unusual occupation. He read the whole of the *Morning Post* and *Standard* from beginning to end, and then he began upon the *Times*. There was nothing in the papers. It is astonishing how little there is in them when you particularly want to find something that will amuse you for an hour or two. He felt inclined to fling them to the other corner of the room after he had gone over everything from the beginning to the end. And it was just at this moment, when he was thoroughly tired of himself and would have welcomed anybody, that he heard a movement at the door. He looked up very eagerly, and Miss Ravelstone came in. To do her justice Letitia was quite ignorant of the accident and that Mr. Parke had been left behind. She had woken with a violent cold—so bad that she too had been compelled to give up the idea of going out. She had put on her plainest dress, knowing that no one would be back until it was time for dinner, and feeling that her grey gown was quite good enough

for the governess and the children, with whom she would have to lunch: she had indulged herself by having breakfast in bed, which was quite an unusual luxury. Her nose was more red than usual through the cold, her eyes were suffused with unintended tears. She did not want to see any one. When she met John Parke's eager look, Miss Ravelstone would have liked the substantial library floor to open and swallow her up.

"Oh, I beg your pardon," she cried.

"Is that you, Miss Ravelstone?" said John. "Is it possible that you have not gone with the rest?"

"I had such a bad cold," stammered Tisch—for a moment she actually felt as if she had done something wrong in going into the room.

"And here am I laid by the leg—I mean by the ankle," said Mr. Parke. Even then Letitia was not fully awakened to the magnitude of the chance which her good fortune had thus put into her hands. She said she was very sorry, and for a moment stood hovering at the door uncertain whether she ought not to retire at once. But John was so much delighted to have somebody to tell his story to that he would not let her go.

"It was all those confounded boards in the breakfast-room," he said. "Why can't they have carpets all over the room? When one is abroad one makes up one's mind to that sort of thing, everything's slippery and shiny there: but in a house in Yorkshire! I came down like an elephant, Miss Ravelstone. I wonder you did not feel the whole house shake."

"I was in bed," said Letitia, "nursing a bad cold."

"A bad cold is a nasty thing," said John, "but it is not so bad as a twist in the foot. You can move about at least—and here am I stuck on a sofa—not able even to ring the bell."

"I will ring the bell for you with pleasure, Mr. Parke."

"That's just one of the last things one would ask a lady to do," cried John, "and I don't know why you should ring the bell for me. If the fellow was here I don't know what I want. I couldn't tell him to sit down and talk to me. It's such a bore to be left here alone, and every one else away."

"I'll sit down and talk to you if you like," said Tisch, with a laugh. Her eyes recovered in the most marvellous manner. She felt inclined to sneeze, but shook it off. She began to wake up and see what was before her. Heir presumptive to Lord

Frogmore ! She had made up her mind that she was likely to meet somebody of importance on this great visit—and had no intention of neglecting any opportunity—though she had never even supposed, never hoped, to have such a captive delivered into her hands in this easy way.

"I wish you would," said John. "I'm afraid I'm not very lively, and this confounded ankle hurts ; but perhaps we can find something to talk about. Are you fond of playing games, Miss Ravelstone ? I wonder if there are any here ?"

"There is a chess board, I know," said Letitia ; "but I don't know much about chess : and there's bezique, and I have a 'go bang' of my own."

"Oh, if it's not too much to ask, please fetch the go bang," cried John.

Miss Letitia nodded her head ; she disappeared, and in two minutes returned a little out of breath with the box containing that intellectual amusement in her hand. She had done something to herself in the meantime, John felt, but though he was trained in the things that ladies "do" to make themselves more attractive he could not make out what it was. They played about twenty games at go bang, and time, which had been so leaden-footed, flew. But everything exhausts itself after a while. When an hour and a half had passed thus, John began to fidget again, and wonder what o'clock it was, and if it would soon be time for luncheon—which was at two in this late house : and it was now only one o'clock, another lingering hour.

"Should you like," said Miss Ravelstone, "to hear a great secret about Cobweb ?" Now Cobweb was the favourite for the next day's race, and John Parke had, as he would himself have said, a pot of money on that horse.

"Anything about the race ? Why, to be sure, of all things in the world," he said.

It has already been mentioned that the Ravelstones were all horsey to the last degree except Tisch, who was not of that persuasion ; but she had heard horses talked of all her life, and while she entered into the biography of Cobweb, John Parke listened with eager eyes.

CHAPTER II.

THIS was how it all began ; how it went on was more than any one could say, certainly not John himself, who woke up one morning to feel himself an engaged man with a more startled sensation than words could express. He knew that it was all right ; that Letitia had been everything that was nice and proper, and had even spoken humbly of her own merits as not good enough for such a distinguished person as himself ; but what were the steps that led up to it, or how it had come about John could give no clear account. He spoke of the incident with a kind of awe. How it happened, or what had come to pass before it happened, was something too great for him which he could not follow ; but from the very first moment he was aware that it was, and could neither be got rid of nor explained away. John was not a very triumphant lover. He was a little subdued indeed, scarcely knowing how to announce it to his friends ; but Letitia took it upon her instantly to bear his burdens, and it was she who told Lady Sillinger, who told everybody, and so that matter was got over. I do not mean to say that it was all settled during the Doncaster week at the Sillingers' ; for however Letitia might have felt, John could never have been got to be so prompt as that. But another benevolent lady who saw how the tide was turning, and who thought it a great pity that a girl should not have her chance, invited Letitia and also John, who happened to have no other pressing engagement, and in a fortnight more great things were done. I have said before that he could never tell how it was, but he very soon came to understand that it was all settled and that it necessitated a great many other arrangements. One of them was the conversation with Lord Frogmore with which this story began. John Parke was still a little dazed and overawed by the great event when he informed his brother, and the manner in which Lord Frogmore at first received his confidence at once bewildered and disconcerted him. But afterwards everything came right, and the arrangements made were satisfactory in every way. Lord Frogmore paid his brother's debts. He gave Miss Ravelstone a very handsome wedding present, and he made such an allowance as became the conditions and

expectations of his heir. He did, indeed, everything that could have been expected in the circumstances. He did not say "I shall never marry, and of course you will have everything when I am gone," which Letitia thought he ought to have said, considering everything; but he acted exactly as if he had said this. You do not make your younger brother an allowance of three thousand a year unless your intentions towards him are of the most decided character; nor, indeed, was it in the least probable that anything could come to snatch the cup from John Parke's lips.

When the time came for the wedding it was discovered by all parties that Grocombe was too far off among the fells—too much out of order, too bare, and—in a word—too shabby for such a performance. Letitia had felt this from the very first moment, and had been strongly conscious of it when she wrote to Lady Sillinger on the very evening on which the engagement took place. She had told her kind friend that she was the happiest girl in the world, and that nobody knew how much there was in John; but even at that early period, when she had said something modestly of her lover's ardour and desire to have the marriage soon, she added: "But oh! dear Lady Sillinger, when I think of Grocombe, and old Mr. Hill, our vicar, my heart sinks. How can I ever—ever be married there?"

As Lady Sillinger entered with great enthusiasm into a marriage which she might be said to have made, Miss Ravelstone had many opportunities of repeating this sentiment, and the conclusion of all was that this kind-hearted woman invited her young friend to be married from Cuppland if she pleased. "It will be such fun for the children," Lady Sillinger said. It was therefore amid all the surroundings of a great house that Lord Frogmore first saw his brother's bride. John did not ask any questions as to the impression Letitia had made. He had a dull kind of sense that it might be better to ask no questions. He was not himself at all deceived about her appearance, nor did he expect his friends to admire her. He took the absence of all enthusiasm on their part with judicious calm. He was not himself enthusiastic, but he had a sober satisfaction in the consciousness that his income was more than doubled, and that he was likely to be very comfortable until the time should come when Frogmore would in the course of nature die. And then, of course, he knew very well what the

succession would be. Letitia knew it too. She had read a hundred times over every detail in the paragraph. She managed to get a copy of the county history and study everything that was known about the family of the Parkes and their possessions. She had even managed to find an old dressmaker who had once been maid to one of the ladies of the family, and who told her about the jewels which must eventually be hers. By dint of industry and constant questioning Letitia had discovered everything about the Parkes before she became one of them. And it was all very satisfactory—more so to her, perhaps, than to any other of the family. John's mother was not at all pleased, but what did it matter about that? She was only the dowager, and except so far as her own little savings were concerned had no power.

When Lord Frogmore first saw his sister-in-law she was in all the importance and excitement of a young lady on the eve of marriage surrounded by dressmakers and by presents. The dressmakers were many and obsequious, the presents were few and did not make a very great show. This was got over, however, by the explanation that most of her wedding gifts had been sent to Grocombe, and that the show at Cuppland was only accidental, not contributed by her old family friends, by whom, of course, the most important were sure to be supplied. The head of the family of the Parkes, when he was asked into Lady Sillinger's boudoir to make acquaintance with his sister-in-law, had a small packet in his hand, to which he saw her eyes turn almost before she looked at himself. Her eyes were light, and not very bright by nature, but there was a glow in them as they shot that glance at the packet in his hand. Did she think it was but a small packet? Lord Frogmore could not help asking himself. The jeweller's box, which he carried done up in silver paper, thus became the chief and first thought on both sides. Letitia was in a pale pink dress, which was not becoming to her. It made her thin hair and colourless complexion more colourless than ever. It threw up the faint flush on the tip of her nose. She rose quickly, and came forward holding out her hand, and rising suggestively on her toes. Did she mean to kiss him? the old gentleman asked himself, which was certainly what Letitia meant to do; but in such a salutation in such circumstances the initiative should at least be taken by the elderly brother-in-law, not by the bride. She stood suspended, however, for a moment, as it were

in the air, with that expectation, and then resumed her seat with a little shake out of her draperies like a ruffled bird.

"I am very glad to make your acquaintance, Miss Ravelstone," said Lord Frogmore.

"Oh, I am sure, so am I," said Letitia. "Dear John's brother."

She simpered and held down her head a little, while Lord Frogmore did not know whether to laugh or be angry. He was not accustomed to this way of stating the relationship.

"Yes, to be sure, dear John is my brother," he said, "and as I don't doubt you are going to make him a very happy man, the family will all be much indebted to you, Miss Ravelstone. In view of the coming event I have brought my little offering." He began to open it out, fumbling at the string in a way which was very tantalizing to Letitia, who would have liked to pounce upon it and take it out of his hand.

"Let me cut it," she said, producing scissors from the dress-maker's box which was on the table, and once more her eyes gave a gleam enough to set that troublesome paper on fire.

"Thank you, but I like to save the string," said the old peer. He felt himself, however, though he rather liked to tantalize her, that all this delay would make his present look unimportant in her eyes. It was a pearl necklace with a pendant of pearls and diamonds, and it had in reality cost him a good deal, and was more valuable than Letitia thought. She drew a long breath when it was at last disclosed.

"Oh!" she said (adding within herself, "it's not diamonds after all.") "Oh, how very pretty; oh, how sweetly pretty; oh, what a delightful little necklace. Oh, Lord Frogmore, it looks like some one younger and much, much prettier than me."

"I am very glad you like it," said Lord Frogmore.

"Oh, Lord Frogmore, any girl would like it. I am sure it is quite beautiful. I thought married ladies didn't wear pearls; but only just to keep in the box and look at it would do one good. It is the loveliest little thing I ever saw."

"You are mistaken I am sure about the married ladies, Miss Ravelstone."

"Am I?" she said, looking up at him with engaging candour. "I am so inexperienced I don't know, but some one told me so; dull stones for girls and bright ones for married ladies is what I

was told ; but I daresay that was all wrong, and you know best——”

“I really don't know what you mean by dull stones,” said Lord Frogmore stiffly.

“Oh, I mean pearls and torques and such things, and the others are rubies and emeralds and diamonds ; but I don't at all understand such questions, I only know they are lovely. How am I to thank you, Lord Frogmore ?”

“I am quite sufficiently thanked if you are pleased, Miss Ravelstone.”

“Oh, but that is so cold,” said Letitia. “I know what I should do if it was my father, or my uncle, or any old friend. But when it is Lord Frogmore——” She stopped with the same arrested motion which had startled him so when they had first met. Decidedly the girl meant to kiss him. He started rather abruptly to his feet and made her a very elaborate bow.

“I am more than repaid, Miss Ravelstone, if you are good enough to be pleased with my little present,” he said.

“Oh ! please call me Letitia—at least,” said the too affectionate bride.

If Lady Sillinger had not come forward at this moment to relieve the strain of the situation by boundless praise and admiration of the necklace, Frogmore did not know to what extremities he might have been driven. He withdrew as soon as he could without any demonstrations of tenderness—and hurrying through the suite of rooms came, to his confusion, upon Lady Frogmore, his stepmother, John's mother, a woman a little younger than himself, and of whom he had always been a little afraid. She was very large, as so many ladies become in their maturity, and had a way of constantly fanning herself, which was disturbing to most men and to her stepson most of all. But as they had mutually perceived each other some way off there was no avoiding an encounter. The Dowager Lady Frogmore had a voice not unlike a policeman's rattle, and as she spoke her large bosom heaved as if with the effort to bring it forth.

“Well, Frogmore,” she said, “have you been paying your respects to the bride ?”

“I have, indeed,” he replied, with much gravity, and a nervous glance behind him.

“You look, my dear Frogmore, as if you were running away.”

"Something like it, I don't deny. I—I thought she would have kissed me," he said, with a burst of feeling. It might have seemed comical to some people, but it was not at all comical to Lord Frogmore.

The Dowager Lady Frogmore stopped fanning herself. "She kissed me," she said, in sepulchral tones; "actually got up upon her toes, and before I knew what she was about, kissed me. I never was so taken by surprise in my life. If there is any kissing to be done it is the family, certainly, that should begin."

"That is quite my opinion," said Frogmore; "but I suppose she means it for the best."

Lady Frogmore shook her head. She shook it so long and so persistently that the flowers upon her bonnet began to shed little bits of feather and tinsel. "Frogmore," she said, solemnly, "mark my words. She will lead John a life!"

"Let's hope not," said his brother.

"Oh! don't tell me. Men never understand. She will lead him a life."

"At all events it is his own doing," said Frogmore.

"I don't believe it is his own doing. He could not give me a rational account of it when I asked him. I believe she's a scheming minx, and this Lady Sillinger's a designing woman."

"What good will it do her? She's got daughters of her own."

"That is just the danger of it," said Lady Frogmore, nodding her head. "If it had been one of her own daughters I would not have said a word. Her own daughters are well enough, but this girl! My poor dear John has been made a victim, Frogmore. He has been made a victim. I wish he had broken his leg or something before he came to this house."

"Nonsense," said Lord Frogmore, "he might have met her anywhere else as well as in this house."

"It's all a deep-laid scheme," continued the dowager, behind her fan. "What that woman has against my poor dear John I can't tell, but it is she that has done it. And mark my words, Frogmore——"

"How many more words am I to mark?" said Frogmore peevishly—then he added, in the freedom of close relationship: "All you say about poor Lady Sillinger is the merest nonsense. She's as good a woman as ever lived."

"Mark my words, Frogmore," repeated the dowager, "that girl will never rest till she has got you out of the way."

"Me!" he laughed, "set your mind at rest," he said, "I am not in her way at all. She means to make a friend of me."

"She'll make a friend of you, and then she'll make you something quite different. She will never be happy," said Lady Frogmore, "till she has got us all out of the way."

"Oh! come, come! We don't live in the fourteenth century," Frogmore said.

And next day, notwithstanding all these prognostications of harm, John and Letitia were married, and set off for their honeymoon. And whatever her intentions might be, there was no longer any possibility of shutting out the Honourable Mrs. John Parke from the amenities of the family. She was kissed, she was blessed. Old slippers were flung after her, and if she had been the most desirable wife in the world, no more could have been done by the family to put the best face upon this event before the eyes of a too quick-sighted world.

CHAPTER III.

NOTWITHSTANDING the dissatisfaction of his family, John Parke began his married life very comfortably, and it is doubtful whether he had ever been so happy in his life before. Lord Frogmore had let the newly married pair have a house of his in Berkshire, in a good hunting neighbourhood, and not very far from town. John was by no means a great hunting man, but it is a respectable occupation to fall back upon when one has nothing else to do, and he was able to keep up his character and take a moderate interest in all that was going on without very much hard riding or sacrifice of comfort. His wife rode with him to the admiration of all the hunting field. But it was not in that way that Letitia meant to gain distinction. She had known too much about horses in her earlier days. She did not intend to be a hunting lady. Still it is always something to be known for one of the best horsewomen in your county. If you do not hunt after that it shows that you have higher aspirations. And it was very good for John to know that there was one thing at least which would have made any man proud of his wife. What Letitia was much more anxious about was that everybody should call. She procured a

list of all the county families within reach, and carefully compared their names with those on the visiting cards that were left at Greenpark. And gradually her high aspirations were carried out. Gradually, not all at once, but under the weighty influence of the peerage and the hunting, most people came. Letitia found herself at the apex of the happiness she most desired, when she ascertained finally that she knew everybody—scarcely one was left out, and those who were left out were the insignificant people for whose opinion nobody cared.

She made a capital wife. She knew a great deal about house-keeping and how to make a little go a long way, and as she was very quick and kept her eyes wide open wherever she went, she very soon picked up those minutiae of comfort and domestic luxury which were not understood at Grocombe. Grocombe, in fact, passed away altogether like a dissolving view. Sometimes when she sat in the boudoir which everybody said she had made so delightful, with its soft chairs and mossy carpets and bewildering drapery, there would come before Letitia's eyes a vision of the shabby parlour at home with its horsehair sofa and thin Kidderminster. The curtains were maroon rep in that family abode. The cover on the table was red and blue worsted: there was not a cosy chair in the place. It is true that there was a drawing-room at Grocombe, but everything in it was falling to pieces and it was never used. What a house to have been brought up in! And what a difference between Tisch Ravelstone, the hard-riding squire's neglected daughter—who had never been educated, or dressed, or looked after by any one, whom the parson's wife had been sorry for, who had been invited to the vicarage out of kindness, who had once thought the vicar's son when he returned from Oxford the most splendid of young persons—and the Honourable Mrs. John Parke in her own beautiful boudoir, with her fine dresses and respectful servants and luxurious prosperity! What a difference! Letitia never permitted it to be seen or even divined that such luxury was new to her. But sometimes there would gleam before her a fading dissolving vision of that other life, and she would ask herself was it possible? Could it ever have been? To go back to such a state of affairs now would be the most horrible misfortune. She said to herself that she would rather die. It is true the moors were glorious round about that Yorkshire house, but Letitia had seen too much

of them to care for the moors; and the stables were admirably arranged, the pride of the district, but Letitia had seen a great deal too much of them and hated stables. And when she thought of the miry ways through which she used to tramp in her Wellington boots and short skirts, and the wintry blighted fir wood, all blown one way as if the trees were shabby pilgrims going to the west, which surrounded the house, and the garden in which a few straggling rose bushes and old-fashioned flowers formed a respectable border to the cabbages, Letitia drew a long breath. "Oh-h!" she said to herself. "What a difference! what a difference!" But this breath of wondering transport was only breathed when she sat alone in her boudoir and John was well out of the way, and could not look up with an "Eh? did you speak?"

There were some things, however, not so easily dropped as Grocombe—and these were its inhabitants. Letitia had five brothers, such a number for a young woman on her promotion, whose aspirations were so far removed from anything they could understand. They could all ride like centaurs, they could doctor horses as well as any vet., harness them as well as any groom, and were as conversant with the pedigrees of the quadruped nobility as the Garter King-at-Arms is with the precedence and qualifications of dukes and earls. Letitia was not unaware that knowledge of this kind is sometimes very valuable, and that in the society of a hunting country it is much esteemed. She knew there were distinguished houses in the neighbourhood in which the stud-groom was a person highly prized for his conversation and social qualities; and on such a dreadful emergency as the appearance of Will, or Jack, or Ted, or Harry at Greenpark, she had already settled in her own mind how to make the best of their qualities: but it was a thought which made her shiver. She had made up her mind that intercourse with her old home was a thing to be gradually dropped altogether. Heaven be praised, there were no sisters. Had there been sisters they would not have been so easily shaken off, they would probably have insisted upon sharing Tisch's good luck, and getting "their chance" also through her means. "Tisch!" think only of hearing that name again ringing through the house in the stentorian voice of one of the boys! If there were no more than this to be avoided it would be enough. Letitia put her hands up to her ears as if to shut out the horrible sound. No,

fortunately, nobody here, nobody in her new world had ever heard that dreadful name : the Sillingers, indeed—but they were people who knew better than to perpetuate such an injury. And on the whole Letitia thought it advisable to drop them also. They were so far off. The north of Yorkshire is a long way from Berks. It is much farther off than either place is, for instance, from London. Mrs. John Parke lamented in her new neighbourhood that she was so far from the old ; but on the whole it was a dispensation of Providence with which she was well pleased.

In the meantime Letitia began without delay to do her duty in the station to which she had been so fortunately called. She produced with much fortitude and pride a son and heir at the end of the first year, and after that, judiciously and not with too much haste, other little Parkes, one after the other, two boys and two girls, thus establishing the family upon a broad and sturdy basis, which precluded all fear of extinction to the family honours. Three sons—such a thing had not been known in the Frogmore family since the creation of the title, which was not, however, a very old one. There could be no doubt that Lord Frogmore was pleased. He sent Mrs. John some of the family diamonds, those jewels which she had so coveted, but which were by no means so splendid as she had hoped, after the first of these events—and he made a great many jokes with his brother as the family increased. But, in fact, he was very considerate indeed, making, more than jokes, a considerable addition to John's income, and also giving up to his brother the house in Mount Street, which Mrs. John had so long coveted. It is very evident, therefore, that Letitia's course of prosperity for the first eight years of her married life was as nearly perfect as falls to the lot of woman. Her new family had forgotten that she was plain—they all had a respect for her as a very clever woman, who had done her duty by the race. She was not, perhaps, all that could have been desired ; "not what I should have chosen for my dear boy," said Lady Frogmore. "A little sharp for my taste—but then my taste had nothing to do with it," said the old lord. But a woman against whom nothing was to be said. Her first season in London—the first season in which she had actually a house of her own, and could be said to take the place which the future Lady Frogmore had a right to aspire to, was

not, indeed, triumphant—Letitia did not aspire to triumphs—but it was, as all her progress had been, a gradual and steady advance. She did not wish to take an insecure place among the fast duchesses and the wild millionaires. She disapproved of all the votaries of dissipation. "We come to town to meet our friends and pay our duty to our Sovereign and see what is going on," she said, "but our delight is in our country home." She had said 'ome at first, as, indeed, many well-bred persons do; but Letitia had outgrown any weakness of that kind. And she was making her way. When she met the Sillingers now she was in a position to patronize them. The girls had not made very good marriages; and what was Lady Sillinger, after all, but the wife of a country baronet, well off, but not very rich, with a nice house and very hospitable in their way, but not a great country place. The Honourable Mrs. John Parke, the future Lady Frogmore, was very good-natured, and glad to be of use to her old friends.

There was another old friend who at this period was brought to her mind by an unexpected encounter at one of the exhibitions, which is a place where the poor may meet the rich without anything surprising being in it. Letitia, in the course of her cursory survey of the pictures, found before her a group which she recognized—or rather it would be more just to say she recognized one of the members of it. She looked, she turned away her head, she looked again. Yes, certainly, it was! it was! the very vicar's daughter who had always been kind to Letitia Ravelstone, who had been held up to her as a model, whose neat frocks and pinafores it had been a vain effort to emulate. The name of the vicar's daughter was Mary Hill, one of the most commonplace of names, yet capable of no such horrible travesty as that nickname of Tisch, which had been the burden of Letitia's youth—but she had always been prettier than Letitia, as well as more neat and carefully dressed. Mrs. John Parke stood in her fashionable London garments, in what might be called the height of her dignified maternal—but not too maternal—position (for Letitia had preserved her figure and was still slim) and gazed upon the companion of her youth. Miss Hill looked forty, though she was not quite so much as that. She was dressed in a grey alpaca, very simply made. She had a close little bonnet of the same colour, tied with pink ribbons under her chin. She was as neat as she used to be in the old days, when she was held up as an

example to Tisch Ravelstone. She was accompanied by two elderly ladies of homely respectability, one of whom called to her continually, "Mary, Mary, you have not looked at this." They were doing the honours of the pictures to her, not sparing her one. She had a catalogue in her hand, but between that and the lady who called "Mary, Mary," and the other who stopped before all the worst pictures and said, with a wave of the hand, "This is one that has been a great deal talked about," their gentle country cousin was evidently a little confused. She smiled, and allowed herself to be dragged in two directions at once. Letitia stood and watched with a sensation which was very mingled. There was good in it and there was evil—a sense of triumph which so swelled her bosom that had her dress not been so perfectly fitted some of the buttons must certainly have burst, but along with this a certain sense of kindness, of pleasure in such a kind face. If it had been anybody but Mary Hill not even the delight of showing how different she herself was from Tisch Ravelstone would have made Mrs. Parke pause. But a softer impulse touched her breast. She stood still where she was until Mary, in one of the many gyrations she had to make to please her companions, turned round full upon her and recognized her with a start and a cry. Letitia, in the excitement of the moment, actually forgave her old friend, whose cry was "Tisch!"

"It is surely Mary Hill," she said, advancing in her turn, with all the magnificence of which she was capable, and that was no small matter. "I have been looking at you for five minutes wondering: but it is you. And you have not changed a bit."

"Oh, no; how should I change? But you; now I look at you again I wonder that I recognized you at all. It was the first glance. I felt it could be no one else."

"It makes a great difference to be married and have a number of children," said Letitia with genial dignity. "You have never married, Mary?"

"Oh, no," said Mary, with a faint laugh.

"And are you just at home—as you used to be?"

"Just at home—as I used to be. We are all older; the boys are out in the world, and little Fanny too, as a governess; but Annie and I are just the same, taking care of father and mother."

"They can't want two of you to take care of them."

"That is true," said Mary, with a faint change of colour, "but we had no education—we elder ones—and we can't teach, and there's nothing else for a girl to do."

"A girl!" said Letitia under her breath, looking at Mary in her gentle middle-agedness from top to toe. But she perceived that the two elderly ladies, who had hitherto kept at a distance overawed by her fashionable appearance, were now consulting together with evident intention of advancing, so she added quickly, "I am so glad to have seen you. Come and see me, please, in the morning before one, at 300, Mount Street, Berkeley Square—the park end—will you? Come to-morrow, Mary, please."

"I will indeed," said Mary, with fervour. "It is the finest thing I have seen in London, dear Tishy, the face of an old friend: and 'as kind as ever," she said with a glance of tender gratitude. She had not perhaps quite expected, nor had Letitia expected, that any such soft sentiment should have arisen in her bosom, if truth be told.

"Don't call me that, for heaven's sake," cried Letitia, waving her hand as she hurried away. And so the two elderly ladies were balked, and Mrs. Parke left the exhibition with a new plan taking form in her mind—a plan which would be a great kindness, yet very useful to herself—a plan which was to produce fruits of an importance almost awful to Letitia, yet at this moment altogether hidden, and the very possibility of them, from her eyes.

CHAPTER IV.

MRS. PARKE went home with a little excitement in her mind, caused by the sight of this friend of her youth. The familiar form brought back still more distinctly all that was past, and its extraordinary contrast with all that was present. Mary Hill in the clothes that she must have been wearing all this long time ("I am sure I know that frock," Letitia said to herself), afforded the most perfect example of all the difference that had arisen in her own life. But this was not her only thought. Perhaps her mind was moved by a little touch of old kindness. Such darts of light will come through the most opaque blanks of a self-regarding life. Letitia was very practical, and it seemed to her that to

keep two women like Mary and Anne Hill in the depths of the country with nothing to do but to take care of the vicar and the aviary, which one could do amply, while she herself stood so much in need of a companion and help, was the greatest waste of material possible. Her active mind leaped in a moment to all the advantages of such a visitor in the house as Mary Hill, an old friend with whom it would not be necessary to stand on ceremony, who could be sent about whenever there was need for her, who would look after the children and "do" the flowers and make herself useful. And what an advantage it would be to her! She would see the world; she could make acquaintance with the best society. She might perhaps meet some one; some old clergyman or family doctor who would make her an offer. The idea took possession of Letitia. It would be such a good thing. She spoke of it to John when they met at luncheon. "Should you mind if I asked an old friend to pay us a long visit?" she said.

"I——mind? I never interfere with your visitors," said John, surprised. He added, however, with a little surprise when he thought of it: "I never knew you cared for old friends."

"They are generally a bore," said Mrs. Parke; "they remind you of things you want to forget and people you hate. But not this one. It is Mary Hill. She is the vicar's daughter at Grocombe. Poor people, they are very poor. It will be a kindness to them. A mouth to feed in such a house is a great matter."

"It is very kind of you, Letitia, to think of it."

"Oh, as for that! and she would be so useful to me. I do feel sometimes the burden of all I have to do—the housekeeping—to make a good show on such a limited income, and to keep up one's social duties; and then the children always wanting something. I don't know how I have borne it so long without any help."

"But I don't see," said John, "how having a friend in the house would mend that."

"No," said Letitia with a sigh; "I did not expect you to see it. But so long as I see it!—all I want is to make sure that you won't go on as so many men do. 'How long is that Miss Hill going to stay? I can never say a word to you without that Miss Hill hearing everything! Is that Miss Hill to be always here?'

Now you must have heard men going on just so, making their wives' lives a burden."

"I hope I shall never do that," said John mildly.

"Mind you don't," said Letitia. And that was all that was said. But when Miss Hill came next morning with a pretty flush of pleasure on her face, and her grey dress looking so prim and old-maidish, and everything about her showing a life arrested just at the point where Letitia had left her—Letitia who had made so much progress—Mrs. Parke's resolution became firmer than ever. She showed her visitor all over the house, apologizing for its small size and imperfections. "We must put up with many things," she said, "in our present circumstances, you know. Frogmore is very nice to us, but so long as he lives we can only have the second place."

"I wish I had only a hundred times as much to put up with," said Mary smiling. "It all looks very delightful to me."

"You should see Greenpark," said Letitia. "We have a great deal more room there. But we are only in town for a short season, and, of course, I don't bring all the children. Yes, baby is just about ten months. They are all troublesome children. They give me a great deal to do. I often think I shall die of it if it goes on long. And there you are, Mary, a lady of leisure at home with next to nothing to do."

Mary's countenance changed. "I have more than you think," she said, "but not in your way."

"Oh, no, not in my way. When you are not married you can form no idea of the troubles one has. But I do wonder you should stay at home when there is so little for you all. Your poor mother must grudge it so. Two daughters to feed and clothe and no likelihood of any change."

"Oh, Tishy, it is cruel to tell me so! Don't I feel it to the bottom of my heart?"

"Don't call me by that horrible name. If I was you I should certainly do something for myself. Who were the two—whom you were with at the exhibition?"

"It was my aunt—and a friend of mine. They live together," said Mary.

"You should go and live with them," said Letitia boldly.

Mary shook her head. "My aunt is as poor as we are at home. She has asked me for a short visit, that is all she can do.

But please, Tis—I mean Letitia, don't make me wretched to-day. I want to get a little pleasure out of this day."

"If I make you wretched it is for your good," said Letitia. "If you have only come for a short visit, it is not worth your while. Your railway fare would cost you more than all the relief it would be at home."

"They were glad I should have the change," said Mary, "but I'm afraid what you say is true, and it was perhaps selfish to come."

"I should say it was very selfish to come if it's only for a short visit. But you are dreadfully thoughtless people about money and always were. If I did not count up everything and calculate whether it was worth while, I don't know what I should do. Now getting to town and back again from Yorkshire must have cost you two pounds at least, even second class——"

"I came third class," said Mary, much downcast.

"But I'm sure it cost you two pounds—why there must have been a cab from the station, and there will be a cab back again to the station, and I should not at all wonder if you gave the porter sixpence, though probably he is much better off than you are. And how long are you to stay with your aunt?"

"A fortnight," said Mary almost inaudibly, hanging her head.

"A fortnight! You don't imagine it can cost your father and mother a pound a week to keep you at home? Ten shillings is the very outside I should say. Well, then, you have thrown away a whole pound on this visit, and probably you got a new frock for it, or a bonnet or something. Oh, that is not the way to get on in the world! At this rate you will always be poor——"

"They were very glad I should have the change," said Mary, pale, but plucking up a little courage. "They don't count up every penny like that. Oh, Ti—Letitia, I am sure you mean to be kind; but when you put things before one like that it is like flaying one alive! For what can I do? I can't be a governess, and there is nothing else that I can be——"

"You might have married," said Letitia, "if you had played your cards as you ought."

At this Mary gave her friend a startled glance and grew very red, but then turned away her head and said nothing. Letitia saw and understood, but took no notice. She went on:

"You might have married old Captain Taylor when he came home from abroad. And what a nice house he had, and plenty of money, and only think how comfortable you might have been. But you just threw him into Cecilia Foster's hands—I don't mean to reproach you, Mary; but it is all the same sort of thing. You never calculate beforehand—now, how are you to make up that pound?"

Letitia said these words with the greatest deliberation and emphasis, looking her friend almost sternly in the face. And to poor Mary a pound was no small matter. She had never thought of it before in this light, and an almost hysterical constriction came into her throat. Make up a pound! It is but a small sum of money, but she did not know how to do it any more than she knew how to fly.

When Letitia had thus brought her friend down to the very earth, she suddenly made a rush at her and gave her a little dab of a kiss. "I will tell you, you dear old thing," she said; "you shall come and pay a long visit to me."

"Tishy! I mean Letitia, oh what do you mean?" said Mary in her surprise.

Letitia threatened her with a forefinger. "I will kill you if you call me that again! What do I mean? I mean just what I say. You shall come and pay me a long, long visit—as long as you like—as long as—you live—or let's say till you are married," cried Mrs. Parke with a somewhat mocking laugh.

"You know very well I shall never marry," said Mary reproachfully.

"Well, never mind—wait till you have seen all the people at Greenpark. You shall come to me as soon as you have done your fortnight with your aunt, and you shall go down with us when we go to the country, and you will keep me company when John is away, and talk to me when I am lonely, and make friends with the children. That will be worth your while, not like a fortnight in London, where you must always be spending shillings and sixpences. Now is it settled, or must you write home and ask if you may come? For it is a real long visit I shall want."

"Oh, Letitia," said Mary, with tears in her eyes, "is it possible you can be so very, very kind, when we have not met for years, and when I thought——"

"What did you think? That I had forgotten my old friends?"

I am one that never, never forgets," said Mrs. Parke. "The first moment that I set eyes upon you I said to myself, 'It's Mary! and she must come to me for a long, long visit.' I can see no use in asking people for a fortnight. It only costs money, and it is not a bit of relief at home."

"I am sure you are quite right," said Mary. "I have been thinking so myself: but then they all thought it would be a change, and though I am fonder of Grocombe than of any place in the world——"

"You are a hypocrite, Mary," said Letitia. "I never was fond of Grocombe at all. It is the dullest place in England—there is never anything going on. Oh, here is Mr. Parke, whom you don't know yet. John, this is Miss Hill, who is coming to us for a long visit. I told you what a dear friend she was of mine."

"How do you do, Miss Hill?" said John, and then he added, the only thing it occurred to him to say to a stranger, "What fine weather we are having. Have you been in the Park to-day?"

This was how it came about that Mary Hill became an inmate of Greenpark. She paid Letitia a long—very long—visit, so long that it looked as if it never would end. Mrs. Parke stood on no ceremony at all with her friend. She confided her children to her with as much freedom as if she had been the nursery governess. She suggested to her that her place was wanted at table when there was a dinner party, and her room when the house was very full for the shooting. She made use of her to interview the housekeeper, and to write the *menus* for dinner. Mary soon came to occupy the position which is sacred to the poor relation—the unsalaried dependent in a house. She sometimes replaced the mistress of the house, sometimes the nurse, sometimes the lady's maid. She was always at hand and ready whatever was wanted. "Oh, ask Miss Hill! Don't, for heaven's sake, bother me about everything," was what Letitia learned to say. She made the children's clothes, because she liked needlework. She arranged the bouquets for the table because she was so fond of flowers. She even helped the maid to arrange any changes that were necessary in Letitia's toilettes, because she had so much taste. Mary was a very long time in finding out why it was that her friend was, as she said, "so kind." Perhaps she never entirely discovered the reason of it. She began, when her visit had ex-

tended to months, to discover that Letitia was not, perhaps, so invariably kind as she had supposed. But that was a very natural discovery, for nobody is perfect ; and to do Mrs. Parke justice, it was only when there was a very large party for the shooting, or a very important dinner, that Mary was ever disturbed either in her room or her place. She appreciated the value of such a friend. When anything was said of Mary's visit coming to an end, Letitia was in despair. "Oh, Mary, how could you go and leave me when you see how much I have to do? Oh, Mary, how could you desert the children, who are so fond of you? And don't you think it is far better to be here, costing them nothing, than to go back to be a burden at home?" These mingled arguments overcame the humble-minded woman. Though it was bitter to hear it said that she was a burden at home, no doubt it was true. And thus it happened that she stayed, always on pretence of being on a long visit, an unremunerated, much exercised upper servant at Letitia's beck and call, for one whole, long year.

It is true that nobody would have divined what confusion of all Mrs. Parke's plans was to result from this expedient of hers ; yet it was apparent enough to various people concerned that she was less long-sighted than usual upon this occasion—apparent, that is to say, after the event which proved it. There could be no doubt that Mary's presence in the house made an opening for other persons to appear who were likely to be much less acceptable to Letitia, and whom, indeed, she had carefully kept at arm's length up to this time, when that brilliant idea of seizing a domestic slave for herself entered into her mind. The world could never get on at all if the selfish people in it were always long-sighted and never forgot themselves. But for the first year all went very well—so well that Mrs. Parke was used to congratulate herself on her own cleverness and success. And everybody was pleased : Mary, who wrote home that she was so happy to be able to save dear Letitia in many little things, and it was quite a pleasure to do anything for her ; and the people at the Vicarage, who were never weary of saying how kind Mrs. Parke was to Mary, and how many nice people she saw, and what a delightful long visit she was having ; and John, who declared that Miss Hill was the most good-natured and the nicest to the children of any one he ever saw. An arrangement which brought so much

satisfaction to all concerned, must surely have been an admirable arrangement. And how it could lead to any upsetting of the life and purpose of the Honourable Mrs. John Parke, or dash the full breeze of prosperity that filled the sails, or in any way endanger her career, was what nobody could have divined. But the great drawback of all mortal chances and successes is that you never can tell, nor can the wisest of mankind, what strange things may be effected in a single day.

(To be continued.)

Authors' Blunders.

By ONE WHO HAS MADE SOME!

PERHAPS it hardly sounds fair to find fault with one's own craft, but fault-finding is far from our mind—that we save for our own particular misdemeanours—it is simply as a piece of drollery the careless slips of some of our fellow-workers have struck us, and as such we have jotted down a few, meaning most certainly malice to no one.

Some things strike one reader, some another; but it is unquestionably odd to a rustically-reared person to come across the extraordinary floral and horticultural remarks made by some writers. Now where could have been the wits of that usually very sensible lady who sent her young hero out to gather apples in April? He came back "laden with rosy pippins," and a little fellow trotting by his side had his small hands full of primroses! Why, where, we should like to know, is the sheltered orchard that contrives to produce ripe apples and spring primroses at the same early date? Somewhere, we fancy, in the same jumble-land as that wherein "Nora was gathering a richly-scented bunch of honeysuckles when the sharp ring of the freshly-roughed horses' hoofs struck her ear, and she saw the dainty little brougham being whirled towards her on the frost-bound roads." This was on the first of October. Those honeysuckles were assuredly late or that sharp frost was abnormally early!

Spring flowers in many authors' hands have a knack of getting into hopeless confusion. A wealth of anemones, sheets of wild heaven-blue hyacinths, nodding cowslips from budding woods and any quantity of fragrant hedge-roses assist continually in forming the posies of ruralising lovers, as they stroll along lanes bordered with aromatic hawthorn, and very often the favourite honeysuckle is flung into the gathering, the date of this botanical luxury being generally mid-May. Unfortunately, as a matter of fact, the lovely little wind flower blooms and is generally over before the compact blue-bell spikes have opened into shape;

these again are faded and dropping into obscurity among their grass-like foliage by time the homely little cowslip besprinkles the meadows—not in *woods*, cowslips prefer the open; rare indeed is the sight of an anemone when sweet May coats the hedges with spring snow, and this last again is well over before the enchanting little spring roses come in, safely nestling under the sunny smiles of Mistress June. The spot that furnished a big bunch of all these lovelinesses at one and the same time must be favoured indeed! We think it can only exist in the fairy-land of some authors' imagination!

Another constant pitfall is to be found in fashions. When one author tells of a beautiful young woman some five-and-thirty years ago whose "shapely head was adorned with dark close-bound braids of glossy hair," he commits a signal error. No young English lady of that date would have dressed her locks in that style. From thirty to forty years back the hair was arranged very differently indeed. First it hung negligently down the back confined in "nets" of varying shades and sizes. Next it appeared spread forth on each side of the head by the assistance of two torpedo-shaped pads. Later it towered away at the back in a huge "chignon," which erection also owed its firmness to horse-hair frizzettes. But as for braids—my good sir!—no one who was any one would have been seen wearing them on any account, unless perhaps some much-oppressed maid-servant doomed to the antiquated mode by an extra severe mistress. If you doubt my word please look at the *Punch* of those periods. That mirror of the times I know will correct your little blunder even as I do.

But it was not a gentleman, it was a lady, and one moreover who from the quality and range of her writings ought to know "all about everything," who wrote not long ago of the drawing-room—date about 1857—in a rich middle-class house, "crowded with gorgeous gilded screens, red—*Aspinalled*, we presume—tea tables, banks of tall blossoming marguerites, dozens of vases of costly cut flowers, chairs of every shape and size, and Japanese nick-nacks scattered about in every particle of space not otherwise occupied." For such an epoch that must have been a remarkable apartment, as in those days it is quite certain "drawing-room suites" were as much *de rigueur* as dining-room ones still are. *Omnium gatherums* of furniture would have been utterly incorrect; red tables were things unknown. Marguerites were

not the rage. The charming inrush of flowers which now beautifies all sorts and conditions of dwellings was only in its infancy five-and-twenty, to say nothing of thirty, years ago, while as for Japanese adornments——! Well, perhaps, the master of that house had a private arrangement with the Mikado, otherwise we don't know how his wife obtained her profusion of the pretty toys which now almost overrun our market and our homes.

The lady of that dwelling matched her reception-room too. She was found by her guests elegantly attired in a soft "clinging tea-gown of delicate white fabric richly trimmed with cream lace." Dear Madam Authoress, you certainly ought to know much better than myself, but whatever would have been thought of a lady who received in such a gown then-a-days? Nothing was on any account allowed to "cling" then. It was the reign of starched muslins. Flounces and frills stuck out at all angles from the fashionable dame. *Sacques* had deserted us, and their elegant successors had not come to us from over the Channel, and no lady of that period would have dared to meet female friends unless clad in draperies having for their foundation steel or crinoline contrivances which gave their skirts a circumference of from three to four yards!

Yes, dress to date is a ticklish matter for an unwary pen, as indeed are other common subjects; railways to wit. By aid of one a popular child of fiction was whirled through several counties at the age of ten, "and never forgot that journey even when she became an old white-headed woman." Now that railway journey and those white hairs cannot be reconciled anyhow! But often we are told of our grandfathers' contemporaries whisking across country behind the iron horse at the rate of fifty miles an hour before a line was laid down in the regions traversed; and even when lines and time are correct we occasionally hear of most singular journeys being performed.

One, for example, in a widely-read recent romance carried the heroine from the Eastern counties to York, and she "stopped for refreshments at Gloucester . . . and felt very weary as she passed Birmingham!" Poor thing, we should think she did! And considering she had been hastily summoned north on a matter of vital importance, we felt vexed for her being kept so long on route when a glance at an atlas or Bradshaw would easily have sent her there several hours sooner. As the slip of a

mature pen this almost equals one of an extremely young author whose MS. we read long ago—we do not think it ever went into print—*tempus* Edward the Third—"the dark-browed jailer stepped gloomily along the vaulted passage where the evil deed was to be done, and with his own unflinching hand—*put out the gas!*"

Another common blunder, but that perhaps is more deliberate than accidental, is the habit of introducing into a story some startling incident promising immense results, the outcome of which is—nothing at all! These hurt us, and in a manner ill-treat us. We recall quite lately a case in point. Two hitherto unheard-of characters stepped into a tale apparently on purpose to frighten the young heroine. Having done this, and been impressively lectured by her for their bad taste, the strangers depart and the elder proceeds to slaughter the younger without the slightest provocation. Next, the murderer is found beside his victim in the spare bedroom of an excellent country clergyman's house. He there drinks cold whiskey and water, makes a capital meal, repents rapidly and vanishes entirely from the book! We never hear another syllable about him. Our vivid expectations are bitterly disappointed and we feel aggrieved.

But more to the category of blunders proper, belong those wondrous animals who live to unheard-of ages, retaining all the charms which make them ever welcome in fiction. One delightful cat, who played in a fascinating manner with her child mistress at the beginning of a recent powerful novel, romped about the room to order twelve years later whenever the same mistress's spirits wanted raising. We should much like to have been acquainted with that cat. All the dear creatures of the kind we have ever known had—or pretended they had—forgotten how to frolic by the time they were three or four, and the care of kittens or the keeping down of mice had come upon them. A game of play is almost as difficult to get out of them then as the impossible blood out of the proverbial flint! Another most engaging puss, not a baby when the story wherein he figured opened, after proving himself the worthy friend of the family all through three volumes, dies in the last chapter, still in perfect possession of his faculties, at the age of—certainly not less than—twenty-six. We think the accomplished chronicler of this cat's virtues had hardly kept in mind the usual length of these pets' lives. A puss

is indeed a patriarch at twenty, though perhaps not such a marvel of longevity as a certain intelligent donkey, who carried first a lady, next her daughter, later still her granddaughter, for their morning rides and must have been, by the end of the story, fifty-seven if he was a day!

Quite different from these, and almost unique, is an assertion common in romance, but which we positively declare incorrect. It is this: "Inez"—, or Geraldine, or Gladys, or anybody, "appeared after a sleepless night with dark circles under her eyes." Now, she really couldn't do it! *Half* circles if you please, or whole ones from her *eyebrows* down, but "circles" *under* the eyes—never! If any doubt, let such a one secure a complaisant friend, paint well-defined circles in Indian ink in the position named, and then judge for himself what would be the effect of a heroine appearing so adorned!

But apart from natural objects of any description, what an abyss of blunders do the exacting rules of grammar plunge us into. "Neither" and "nor," for instance. How absolutely uncontrollable some pens find these little words, and what a tiresome trick they have of taking upon themselves pluralising properties to which they have no right. Continually we hear "that neither Ida nor Gerald *were* able to speak for some minutes." Well then we suppose both of them *was* silent. One needs to come to close quarters with these Will-o'-the-wispish parts of speech. They are almost as terrible to deal with as those perplexing verbs to 'lay' and to 'lie.' Over these, authors, otherwise irreproachable, frequently trip, while the great host of minor writers appear to give up wrestling with them, for we get a heroine who had "*laid*" on the sofa an hour; a hero who "*lies*" his tired head; or another who cries out, "let that glove *lay*, sir," in nearly every book we open. As for past participles and past tenses, we give up noticing their little vagaries, so constant is the stream of characters who "*rung* for their maid, and *drunk* the water hastily after having *sang* the song—." And so forth!

But one of the commonest stumbling-blocks in fiction is that much-courted and frightfully mismanaged orb, the moon. Considering how useful this luminary is for love scenes, meditations, murders, &c., the way in which people who introduce it persist in ignoring its natural movements is really most ungrateful. Thus we are frequently confronted with "day-old silver crescent moons,

high up in the clear heavens"—when? Why, as soon as the sun has set! New moons are continually *rising* in the west, while full moons get solemnly up at midnight. More than once they have preferred to do this in the *north*, but in for one eccentricity they think perhaps they may as well be in for another. As for waning moons they get up as the sun goes down, and wander about, north, south, east, and west, just as the situation requires them. For the better control of poor slandered Luna, may we suggest a helping hand in that shining light of every family bookshelf—"Whittaker!"

Another meteorological snare is the rainbow. Far less frequent in fiction than the moon, still, when it does get there it ought to be properly placed. What *was* that lady thinking of, who, having put her heroine in a church towards the close of a showery day, made her gaze out of a window in a western (!) apse, "and behold in the heavens before her a brilliant many-hued bow?" Very few minutes later we hear the building was in total darkness, at which we are not surprised. After achieving that phenomenal effort in the west, Nature must have wanted repose.

Sport of all kinds is dangerous ground for the uninitiated. Even tennis is full of traps. No young man should say to his pretty partner, "A love set then to us," when their opponents have scored in half the games. Nor is it really practicable to play tennis, as a veteran writer lately made her young people do, "by faint twilight in mid-November, till near dinner-time," and dinner was at seven forty-five, and they were playing on a grass court! But that writer being veteran, may never have joined in the game, and so failed to realize how net and balls become invisible before the twilight is even very faint.

In the same way, writers little acquainted with the "Field" have been known to send a house party fox hunting in July; others send them cub hunting in February; some make their gentlemen bring home big bags of pheasants in April; others go hare hunting late in March.

On a par with these are the incautious folks who make their characters "tap *thermometers*," to see if they are rising, or who make the said thermometers record the astounding register of two hundred degrees Fahrenheit in the shade, or who send visitors to the Academy in September, or to the Monday Populars in May, or make their linnets lay "sky-blue" eggs (we

can fancy how surprised Mrs. Linnet would be at that blunder!),
or——

But enough. Let us stop, conscience-stricken. Let us remember we have very nearly made one or two of these blunders ourselves. . That it is exceedingly possible we may make others, and therefore the most judicious course will be to close this little peep at authors' lapses by the remark that with readers increasing by thousands yearly, writers have to work very hard and very fast, and the wonder is not that these slips occur now and again, but that they should not be fifty times more frequent than they are!

ALICE PRICE.

A Christmas in India.

By MRS. ALEXANDER FRASER,

Author of "PURPLE AND FINE LINEN," "THE NEW DUCHESS," etc., etc.

CHRISTMAS, in our pleasant little sea-girt isle, is not only a glorious and thrice-blessed season regarded from a Christian point of view, but from a point of view earthy it is considered to be a period of mild festivity and calm enjoyment surrounded by the domestic circle, a period in fact to be looked back upon— notwithstanding its concomitants of bills and biliousness—with immense feelings of satisfaction, but Christmas in the far East, as far as my experience goes, is full of startling incidents and a delicious novelty and excitement that give spice and zest to existence. Staid English folk whose peregrinations have either been confined to the limits of the United Kingdom or have never extended beyond the ordinary Continental resorts during the season of excursions and return tickets, and who have never set eyes on wild beasts excepting from a comfortable distance, in show caravans or at the Zoo, would scarcely credit the hair-breadth escapes that flavour Anglo-Indian life with rare piquancy. A huge tiger, superb in his strength, chafing within his iron prison-house, bounding with lithe free motion high up in the air, or crouching low, with his eyes aflame and his ears level with his superb head, as though he were in the very act of settling down on his victim, may be an attractive sight to the bystander regarding him from a safe point, but those who have been in close juxtaposition to the brute in question, with the knowledge that little or no barrier existed between them and his cruel jaws, can barely regard the creature without nervous sensations. I remember one morning, quite early, just as Aurora was making streaks in the grey sky with her rosy fingers, I and a friend enjoying a gallop found ourselves suddenly within some yards of an enormous leopard, who was drinking at one of the small streams or "nullahs" that intersect the Indian roads. He was a splendid beast, a tawny gold with rich spots and a tail that looked in the first flush of dawn like a gilded plume; as we

halted he looked at us, while we could hear our hearts beating ; I believe he hesitated a bit whether he would spring or not, but after a moment or two of horrible suspense he walked majestically away in the opposite direction, swinging his tail slowly as he went, and we were allowed to breathe again ; but this was a very tame little episode to another adventure, which, though it occurred some years ago, is really as vivid to my mind as if it had happened but yesterday.

We had been staying for a couple of months in the City of Palaces, thoroughly going in for the gaiety of that capital, which during the cold season, while it is the seat of government, is the gayest of the gay, but we were booked to pass Christmas with some near relatives at the out-station of Jumalpoore, some considerable distance from Calcutta.

According to Indian custom our evening meal had been taken long after sundown, and it was striking a quarter to midnight when I and another lady, bidding farewell to numerous friends, prepared to start on our journey.

Trains were not the mode of locomotion in those days ; in fact only about twenty miles of rail from Calcutta to a French settlement called Serampore had been accomplished, under the difficulties of the monsoon and the fierce meridian sun, by the army of impecunious civil engineers who had flocked eastward on the first rumour of railway employment being afloat. I remember how brightly the Eastern heavens were studded with countless stars that shone down with that curiously clear radiance that belongs only to hot climes, turning night into day and scarcely leaving a desire for the advent of chaste Diana amidst her brilliant satellites.

My friend and I, attired in the loosest of white wrappers, reclined comfortably at full length in the commodious "palanquins" that everybody has heard of—and a very pleasant mode of locomotion they are. On a shelf above our feet were the usual provisions for such a journey—a flask of brandy, a bottle or two of soda water, a tin of biscuits, a large vial of laudanum or Jeremy's opiate, another of Jamaica ginger ; travellers in India always bearing in mind that an attack of cholera or some such ghostly visitant might present itself in the midst of the jungle, many a mile distant from medical aid or from an European habitation.

Side by side we went, with the ordinary "grunt" of our human beasts of burden sounding in our ears with the monotony of a lullaby. We were carried so evenly and in such close vicinity that we were able to chat occasionally together, and quite enjoyed the novelty of the situation.

On the outer sides of our conveyances the "Masālwallahs" flourished their great torches aloft, renovating the light continually by drops of oil from a sort of rude pipkin made of skin, and looking themselves in the flaring glare, with their half-nude figures and ebon faces, like the hobgoblins that had been held *in terrorum* over us in nursery days.

On, on we went—through the brushwood, over sandy plains, beneath luxuriant mango topes, between vistas of fragrant baubal, crushing down ruthlessly fields of the green grain intersected by nettles.

Wading through stagnant pools in which grow in myriads the "zingara," or pignut, a delicious esculent in spite of its unattractive nursery, and not halting on our progress but for a few seconds, to allow of a change of shoulders for our carriers. Every three miles of our journey out of the darkness loomed the dusky forms of our "relay," emerging weird-like and fantastic from the tumbledown "Serai," or road-side mud-hovel, with "hubble-bubbles" in hand and sleep heavy on their lids.

At length the brushwood began to grow taller and taller. The boughs of the trees struck against our palanquins; the feet of the bearers glided with a snake-like rustle through the long tangled grass, and the light from the stars waxed dimmer each moment as the thick foliage of the jungle met in a canopy overhead, and our carriers, fatigued, forgot to replenish the oil in their torches, that began to burn more and more faintly. Sleep overcame us as well, and my friend and I were just falling into the arms of Morpheus, when all of a sudden down went our palanquins, touching each other with an awful thud on the hard ground, and shrieking with maniacal strength, "Sāār! Sāār!" (tiger), the cowardly natives, leaving us to our gruesome fate, decamped as fast as their bare legs could carry them into the pervading gloom!

Our first instinct of self-preservation was to bang to and lock the outside door of our fragile fortress. Our next action was to clasp one another's hands and send up a prayer to Providence for safety.

Breathless we sat, straining every nerve to catch each trivial sound, but not daring to relieve our feelings by the utterance of one word of mutual comfort or hope. Round the palanquins the creature kept stalking like a sentinel, with a measured tread, switching his great heavy tail against the doors, sniffing loudly as he scented the dainty fare that awaited in terrible agony the success of his efforts to arrive at it. Then his movements became more energetic, and we could hear him grating himself against the sides, and then of a sudden he seemed to spring and fall heavily on the roof of our paltry stronghold.

Who could describe our awful terror? Each moment lagged on its course and seemed to lengthen into hours and even days. What on earth was to become of us we knew not! Deserted by the bearers in the midst of the thick jungle and with no firearms—even if we could have plucked up sufficient courage to utilize them—and with no apparent means of escape from the bloodthirsty beast, who did not seem to weary of his attempts to force himself through the wooden barriers. Supposing the natives did not return! Of food we had but a paucity after all, and the bottles of water we had brought had already been gone into to assuage the thirst of an Indian night. We dared not even open the aperture to the extent of an inch for fresh air, for horror of confronting our deadly enemy, or feeling his hot breath close to us. Fear and suspense grew each instant more insupportable, and firmer we clasped each other's hands, while big beads of perspiration gathered on our foreheads and the loud throbbing of our hearts was audible in the dreadful silence that we kept. And still the time wore on and brought no sign of succour!

A tiny streak of light gleamed suddenly between the roofs of the palanquins, and we knew then that dawn had broken and was peering down on our distress through the narrow interstices of the branches that interlaced above, and with the first glimmer of day, hoarse, unearthly yells resounded close by, and believing that all the wild beasts of the jungle had broken loose on us, we gave ourselves up for dead women.

A trampling on the brushwood as of a million feet, a crowding—a scuffling—then the light grew blood-red as with a fearful jerk our palanquins were pulled asunder, and we believed for a second that we had descended into the infernal regions, as the torches flared into our eyes and fell fully on the scared faces and

uncouth forms of the dastardly natives, who had returned at last accompanied by a score of wild-looking villagers brandishing huge sticks aloft and vociferously acquainting us by gestures that the tiger had bolted (as he generally does at sight of the human form divine, if it confronts him in masses enframed in lurid glare), and that we were—*safe!*

We had scarcely recovered our normal serenity of mind after the horrors of the night, when an hour or two after proceeding on our journey the palanquins were again brought abruptly to a standstill.

Once more our hearts experienced a most unpleasant decreotic motion—surely a second bloodthirsty brute had not come to reconnoitre us! But we were reassured, though only to a certain extent, when the bearers pointed out to us that we had arrived at the banks of a river that lay between us and our destination. What else they wished to impress on us we failed to comprehend, so my friend and I crept out of our berths and surveyed our surroundings in dismay.

There we were! We could not go backwards through the weary miles we had come, though we would fain have found ourselves located safely once more at Spence's Hotel, Calcutta, and we could not go forwards, for there was no bridge and no boat, and only the muddy bank (on which, some yards off, we descried with a shudder three long grey alligators lying basking in the morning sun, their great jaws apart with a cruel-looking chasm between) and a broad deep river within sight. What were we to do? we questioned piteously, our spirit failing us. The bearers had dwindled down from a dozen to two, the rest having once more disappeared in a mysterious fashion. But after the expiration of one of the longest half-hours they returned, accompanied by an old native, looking with his long white hair and black face like a baboon. From the amount of "*salāāming*" and the obsequious manner of our attendants towards him, we guessed that he was the jemadar, or village swell; and we raked up our best Hindostanee to consult him as to our predicament. Our attempts were dreadfully lame, however, and we had almost given up hope of arriving at an understanding when several of the villagers arrived carrying large wide-mouthed earthen "*gurrās*," or pots.

What rôle these pots were to play in our proceedings we had not an idea, but after a good deal of gesticulation and facial dis-

tortion and strange antics on the part of our friendly baboon, we were made to comprehend that there was only one mode of crossing the river.

Frightened and nervous, we prepared for the inevitable by wrapping our flannel peignoirs tight round us, and each stepping into an earthen pot; this accomplished, we were lifted by a couple of natives and launched on the water. My friend was in front of me, and I felt decidedly uncomfortable as I saw her frail and certainly original bark pushed violently by a native who swam behind. It kept on spinning round and round, while mine followed suit, but eventually reached the opposite shore, when our earthen pots disgorged a pair of cramped, limp, dizzy occupants, who were thankful to collapse on to a heap of stones, while the palanquins, with each of their feet encased in smaller pots, made their voyage towards us. Surely we had had enough of excitement and novelty during the last hours? and it was quite heavenly to find ourselves by sunset at the bungalow at Jumal-pore.

The society at the little out-station without a pretence at refinement was yet amusing and friendly enough. The social element was strongly flavoured with planters; planters of tea and planters of indigo. The *plupart* of these had been impecunious youth in the old country; but by dint of intelligence and perseverance had contrived to arrive in India at being possessors of moderate incomes. They were all of them of a very superior class to their helpmates, who mostly rejoiced in a "dip of the tar brush" and a strong unpleasant accent. As an illustration of the conversational powers of one of these ladies, I may say that after a dead silence of several minutes that followed my introduction to her she suddenly burst into:

"My! what a funny dress you have got on! It doesn't stick out a bit! *We* wear very large hoops—they are the fashion in Jumal-pore!"

I asked my hostess afterwards where the planters picked up their wives.

"In the school at Kiddarpore, near Calcutta, you know," she answered. "They are nearly all 'chee chees'—girls who haven't ever been out of the country are called by that name. There are periodical dances given at the school to which any man wanting to marry can go, and the girls are trotted out for inspection. If

the individual matrimonially inclined finds one to his fancy the courtship occupies but a very brief time. It is very funny and runs usually in this wise:

"She—'Teapot got?'

"He—'Will get.'

"She—'Buggy got?'

"He—'Not yet.'

"She—'Plenty of money got?'

"He—'No! But plenty of *heart* got!'

and about a week or so afterwards the two are made one."

Our friends, anxious no doubt to show us as much life as possible in an Indian out-station, invited all Jumalpore to assist at the Christmas festivities, it seemed to me, judging by the heterogeneous mass of humanity of both sexes that put in an appearance about "tiffin" (lunch) time, arrayed in the most bizarre garments I had ever seen. One lady actually came in a low primrose silk dress with marigolds in her hair, with the sun at full meridian lighting up her yellowness. After tiffin we all played at snap-dragon, and blindman's buff and hunt the slipper, beside other primitive games, and after a late dinner, at which I noticed that the planters and their wives all ate voraciously of curry and rice, disdaining all the other delicate dainties at which a good bobochee (cook) is a dab, we danced, and sang, and once more my speculative faculties were taxed to discover where these peculiar people had learned to trip the light fantastic, and why their versions of "Annie Laurie" and "God save the Queen" were so utterly different to those in England. It was quite a relief to one's eyes and the tympanums of one's ears when half-a-dozen "nautch" girls from a neighbouring village came in, scantily clad, *principally* in little tinsel stars, with an apology for the thinnest muslin just here and there, and disported themselves in those amorous movements that are evidently intended more for the gratification of the male portion of the audience than for the female. It was very late when all this so-called "fun" was over, but even on Christmas eve we were doomed to another little exciting adventure before we went to bed.

Jumalpore, like all Indian stations that are positively lovely, through the very lavishness of the tropical vegetation had the disadvantage of being full of all sorts of creeping things, of which I in common with most English folk had a deadly horror. The

very sight of a green lizard or a striped centipede made my blood curdle, but the idea of a scorpion or a snake made my heart stand still. My friend, who shared my bedroom, was not luckily of the same nervous temperament as myself.

The night was simply splendid ; the moon shone down with a pure silvery radiance by which the smallest print could have been read ; countless stars added to the brightness without, and a soft wind, which was most refreshing and restful, stole in with a low swish through the open venetians. I was very sleepy, however, and matter getting the victory over sentiment, I deserted the window for my bed, while my friend, still moonstruck, stood gazing out rapturously at the lovely gardens of dew-laden flowers sleeping under the glorious beams. I was just falling into slumber when I heard her speak in a queer, low but sharp voice.

"Come here," she said.

So I jumped up and went over to her. She stood perfectly still—almost rigid—at her post. Her face, usually wearing a bright English colour, by the light of a little flickering oil lamp that occupied a niche in the wall looked perfectly ghastly, and her eyes had a horror-struck expression in them.

The venetians in India are made on a different principle to those in England ; out there they turn on a strong centre lath, and by pulling this up or down you can open or shut them at will.

For a moment I stared bewildered at my friend, believing the strong rays of the moon had affected her suddenly. One arm hung down with the hand clenched nervously ; the other hand was raised to the venetians, holding them so tightly closed that all the veins in it stood out like cords. I looked, and looked—and then, with a deadly faintness stealing over me, I comprehended——

Great Heavens ! round her white arm, which the loose sleeve of her wrapper left bare to the elbow, was a hideous bracelet—a bracelet of black slimy coils ending with a forked tail ! It was the long slender shining body of a cobra capello—that most venomous of the snake species.

She had suddenly felt the horrible cold reptile against her flesh, and even as she looked down and saw it, it came to her like a flash of lightning to save herself from death by keeping its

head squeezed between the venetians until help came. Bravely she stuck to her task, while my cries soon brought the help she so dearly wanted, and our host with one sharp slash of a knife decapitated the cobra and flung off the ebon rings that clung tightly round her wrist.

We were too upset to enjoy much sleep that night, but after a week we forgot, like all Anglo-Indians, about the episode, and began to watch with surprising indifference through our mosquito curtains the peregrinations of lizards and even tiny little scorpions on the whitewashed walls.

My friend's pluck and coolness were once more called to the fore before our visit terminated. She was an excellent artist—as good, in fact, as many professional ones—and being anxious to take away with her some little bits of the beautiful environs, she started off with our host one morning, brushes and colour box in hand. The weather was delightful even at mid-day; a nice little cool wind leavened the heat, and under the big banana trees it was as pleasant as at a picnic in a Devonshire lane—and then the milk of the fresh cocoanuts was such a refreshing draught. After the sketches had been taken and Phœbus had begun to make rapid tracks westward, they strolled down to rather a well-known spot in the vicinity. It could scarcely be dignified by the name of ravine, but was rather a sort of “gap” between two natural embankments, on which palms, bamboos and baubals, with their golden fragrant blossoms, grew thickly. The gap itself held a pool of clear water in which little pebbles as white as snow glanced up like sparks of silver from the bottom, while broad-leaved plants, crimson about the edges, together with bulrushes, fringed the borders.

My friend, charmed with the scenery, drew our host on and on until a gentle acclivity was reached, and here on a low broken stone wall they sat themselves down, but not for long.

The day had not closed in, in fact the sun was still shedding his amber glory, toned down by a few greyish clouds around, but in spite of this evident fact Mr. Percy rose slowly, and spoke in a low tone.

“It is getting dark,” he said. “Come!”

My friend rose at once, without a word, and the two walked away, and on and on, until the romantic gap was left far behind—then he paused.

"Do you know why I brought you away so suddenly?" he asked.

"Yes," she answered quietly. "I saw the tiger looking inquisitively at us from under the bushes, and wondered whether you and I should live to get back to Jumalpoore again!"

"If you had screamed, the brute would have sprung on us as sure as a gun!"

She was very pale, Mr. Percy told me, but she positively smiled as he said that, and did not tremble a bit.

But that Christmas was evidently not to end without another startling, and I must confess very uncomfortable experience, which came about in this wise. We had arranged to accomplish a portion of our backward journey to Calcutta by boat. It was a phase of Indian life I was anxious to try. The country boats with their quaint form, their funny little cabins, had quite a fascination for me, and I anticipated immense enjoyment in going down the winding river, with a serene blue sky overhead and a shore on either side clothed with such luxuriant beauty as northern climes never possess. Everything tended towards the pleasure I had contemplated, for two days, as we glided down the smooth current, and began to believe that it was our first taste of the *dolce far niente*. On the third day we were still of the same opinion as we put-to close to the shore at sunset, and, lounging comfortably in easy chairs on the little upper deck, surveyed a scene, not only novel, but wonderfully picturesque to English eyes. On the bank of the river, our dandies (boatmen), squatting on their haunches, as skilfully as Soyer himself manipulated their evening meal. It was done almost in the twinkling of an eye. Three bricks (many of which, half-burnt, lay about the spot, as if they had been utilized for the same purpose by other travellers) were placed together in a three-sided square; a few sticks speedily made a fine blaze, and the earthen vessel lightly crowning the whole soon emitted a right savoury odour of fish curry, strongly impregnated with garlic and golden with turmeric that would have tickled the palate of a gourmet at a St. James' Street Club. A background of cocoanut and palm-trees, with the common green parrakeets of the country squabbling and screeching among the branches, added to the peculiar beauty of the scene, which however had its drawback in one or two lean hungry pariah dogs that skulked about look-

ing longingly at the oleaginous compound that was being devoured by the boatmen. Every now and then a "Tattoo," the rough ungainly ponies that all Indian villages rejoice in, trotted towards our encampment, and then galloped away again, kicking their heels in the air as they went. And there was one more sight peculiar to the land we were in, which once catching a glimpse of we were careful to avoid afterwards—some hundred yards away on the bank, a conclave of horrible grey vultures sitting over the charred remains of some poor Hindoo.

Presently our quarters were invaded by a crowd of natives, some semi-nude, and others in ordinary white garments and turbans. They came trooping down right to the water's edge, gesticulating and pointing to some object in their midst.

This turned out to be an old man, who being quite unable to keep his equilibrium was supported by two of his companions, to whom he clung like grim death; to our mind his appearance suggested a much too free indulgence in "arrack," a strong coarse juice extracted from the palm and possessing intoxicating properties; we were, however, made to understand at last through the medium of a native servant our friends at Jumalpoore had kindly transferred to us, on account of a smattering of English he possessed, that the groaning, writhing, miserable piece of humanity was ill, and having heard that the Feringhees (Christians) were grand at doctoring, they wanted physic for him.

My friend and I held a consultation at once on the matter, and producing our medicine-chest hastily went over its contents, deciding that an emetic was *the* thing which would probably relieve him, having always in mind that the arrack was the real cause of his pitiable condition. Surrounded by his comrades, he swallowed the nauseous draught, and after a few moments we knew by his smile and a wag of his head that he felt better. After a little he started on his homeward way with his black body-guard, and we were left to settle down for the night, our boat moored strongly to the shore and our boatmen, wrapped up in white sheets that looked weird and ghostly in the gloom, extended on the deck. Excited by the events of the evening, we were not inclined for slumber; so, drawing a shawl round us, for the night air came chilly, we sat down in the cabin that served as a sitting-room to have a chat. The hour was wonderfully peaceful and pleasant; the water lapped, lapped with a monotonous but

soothing sound against the boat ; the moon shone clear ; the hum of the insect world, the croak of frogs, rose up from the bank, and with our cups of tea which we had concocted ourselves in an etna, and a tin of biscuits to regale ourselves on, we felt as happy and cheery as if we were taking our Bohea in some sumptuous Belgravian boudoir.

But—not for long !

As the hand of our clock pointed to eleven, we were startled by a hooting and shouting that was deafening, and peeping out of the apology for a window, we saw under the moonbeams what seemed like a hundred ghostly figures, all in white, and swooping down towards the very spot where we were anchored.

The noise, the dreadful gesticulations, the swarthy physiognomies, the curious facial distortions, were too awful, and once more we believed we were dead women—sacrifices to be offered up to the holy river by the fanatical host. Our boatmen jumped up in a trice, and after a loud parley between them and the invading force we were made to understand that the old man to whom we had given physic was dying, if not dead, that he had been poisoned by the Feringhees on purpose. He had been seized with violent sickness (which was not strange), and because the emetic had done its work well, we were to be torn asunder by the infuriated mob. Vainly we gesticulated in return, asserting that the physic was *good—good!* They shook their heads and wagged their beards, and even pelted us with a stone or two. Breathless with fright we hid ourselves under the little dining table, listening in agony to the warfare that was going on outside. A frantic rush seemed to be made on deck ; the boatmen shouted aloud and shook our door violently, which we had locked. Then suddenly we felt the boat move, and mustering up courage for a reconnoitre of the battle, we found that our bark was drifting quietly down the stream and the enemy were left some distance behind. Our boatmen had cut the rope as our only chance of escape from the half-drunken mob, who would have killed us as soon as look at us. The next day our eventful water journey was finished, and we soon found ourselves safe and sound within the four walls of Spence's Hotel. But when we look back to that Christmas, we simply wonder that we are alive to tell the tale !

Homburg Beauty.

A NOVEL.

By MRS. EDWARD KENNARD,

Author of "A CRACK COUNTY," "MATRON OR MAID," "KILLED IN THE OPEN," "THE MYSTERY OF A WOMAN'S HEART," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXII.

GOING TO THE RACES.

THE fine weather continued and the day of the Frankfort races was ushered in by a cloudless azure sky, in the midst of which a glittering sun shone like a ball of fire, whilst the heat was so great as to be almost unendurable to people accustomed to a colder climate. Hetty was in a perfect fever of excitement. She had not seen Herr Von Kessler since the afternoon of Amelia's tea-party, and although only a few days had elapsed since then, the time seemed desperately long. She was aware of the cause of Karl's absence. He had informed her that he contemplated leaving Homburg and taking up his abode at Frankfort, in order to give Adare his final gallops. The knowledge that to-day they would meet to a certainty, made her heart beat fast with pleasurable anticipation.

The heat was so intense that, had it not been for her promise, she would assuredly have appeared in a white gown, but climatic influences were not sufficient to induce her to break faith with Karl. Suffering from a certain consciousness which she found impossible to overcome, she arrayed herself in a very pale blue muslin, daintily trimmed with a profusion of white lace, in which her glass very emphatically assured her that she looked positively charming. When her preparations were complete she entered the sitting-room.

Mrs. Davidson did not at all approve of Hetty being invited on a baronet's coach, and placed under the chaperonage of a strange woman, when she herself had not even been asked to undertake the very natural duty of looking after her own child. To Hetty she lost no opportunity of expressing her dissatisfaction with the arrangement, calling it a most improper and insulting one.

That Sir North Penywern should ignore her produced a decided feeling of irritation. She was a lady who did not like being ignored. For the matter of that very few of the fair sex do. Attention they must and will have, whether old or young, pretty or plain. To be admired is a natural craving of the female heart. The mere sight of Hetty's fair face, rippling over with smiles, served to increase the sense of personal injury from which Mrs. Davidson suffered. She too would have liked to have been going to the races, dressed in her best clothes, with a chance of meeting a Serene Highness and other distinguished individuals. The back-parting was delightful, but as her ambition grew, she admitted to herself that very soon she should hanker after a front view, supplemented in process of time by friendly and gracious speech.

"Well, Hetty," she observed, in a tone of voice which effectually contradicted the wish expressed by her words, "I hope you'll enjoy yourself. I sincerely *trust* that you'll enjoy yourself, although I doubt it. For my part I can't conceive of a party being either very nice or very well conducted when a parcel of young men and young women are jumbled together anyhow, so to speak. They ought to have a proper person to take care of them, who would prevent liberties."

"Mrs. Northcote will do us that good service, no doubt," returned Hetty, trying to conceal a broad smile.

"Mrs. Northcote, indeed! What influence has she? She's a fool, or to be more polite, an amiable nonentity. That niece of hers can do anything she pleases with her. I never saw a more ridiculous spectacle of incompetence and effacement on the one side and of pertness and forwardness on the other. Men dislike girls like Miss Dawkins really, though they may pretend to run after them for a time. Take my advice, Hetty; if you ever want to get married, abstain from following your friend's example. She's loud, vulgar and bad form."

"You seem to have taken an extraordinary dislike to poor Milly, mamma. I can't understand it, when she has been so kind. However, if it's any consolation to you, I'm not thinking of getting married just at present. I'm too young." But nevertheless, she blushed rather consciously, as if in her innermost being she acknowledged that her youth was not an insuperable objection to matrimony.

"You intend to wait until Lord Charles proposes," interposed Mr. Davidson, in high good humour, for the young gentleman's attentions were daily becoming more marked. "You'll tell a different tale then, I'll be bound, and quite right too. There's nothing like a girl flying at high game whilst she is about it."

Hetty vouchsafed no reply. The subject now started was one which she did not care to pursue. It inspired a curious repugnance, seeming, indeed, to desecrate the image of Karl, which stood out so prominently in her mind. The more her father dwelt on the advantages to be derived from such a match the more obstinately did she refuse to contemplate it. Things might, perhaps, have been otherwise if she had never met Herr Von Kessler; if he had not danced so divinely, pressed her hand with such meaning, and presumed to call her darling to her face. It was very naughty, frightfully audacious, but strangely nice. She could not drive his memory out of her head, or think of any other man. But it would be absurd to tell her father this fact. Unconsciously Mrs. Davidson came to her daughter's assistance and removed the necessity of giving any immediate answer.

"I must say," observed the elder lady, in an extremely dissatisfied tone, "I do think that Sir North might have asked me to join his party. It would have been a great deal more polite, and without possessing any undue vanity, I feel convinced I should have made a very much better chaperon than that dull, stupid little Mrs. Northcote, who seems to have no eyes in her head whatever, and who lets the girls do exactly as they please."

"It ought to prove a consolation to us both to know that Lord Charles Mountgard is going," remarked Mr. Davidson, complacently. "We can trust Hetty with him. He will look after her and take quite as good care of her, no doubt, as if we were there ourselves. By-the-way, Emma, I had not the least idea until this moment that you cared about going to races. Had you mentioned your taste sooner, we might have hired a fly."

"A fly, indeed! Do you think I would be seen in a common, dirty fly, when my daughter is perched up on a magnificent coach and four! No! thank you, Mr. Davidson. Such a proposition only shows how little you understand my character. *You* may grovel if you like. *I* aspire to soar. If I do a thing at all I choose to do it well. Amelia Dawkins told Hetty this morning that Prince Friskovitch was going to the races. If His Serene

Highness were to see me seated in an ordinary hired vehicle, I should lose caste in his eyes for ever. He would never want to be introduced to me, nor to make my acquaintance. It stands to reason."

"I don't fancy the carriage would make much difference one way or the other," said Mr. Davidson.

"That shows how little you know. It would make all the difference, and very naturally, too. You don't surely suppose that Princes care to associate with people who drive in cabs—the idea! No, it's very unfortunate, and I should have gone with Sir North Penywern, had I been asked in a proper manner, but as it is——" and she smoothed down the front of her dress, whilst her fat face assumed a comical expression of injured resignation, "I shall stay at home. *Now-a-days*," laying a strong emphasis on the word, "it appears the proper thing for young women to go gadding about here, there, and everywhere, whilst their mothers are voted old fogies and are calmly asked to dispense with even the mildest amusements."

"My dear Emma," said Mr. Davidson soothingly, "you have plenty of amusements, only of a different sort. At sixty a woman is generally supposed to give up flirting and caring for the society of boys young enough to be her sons."

"Nonsense, John; what has that got to do with it? Do you imagine that because I am no longer a girl, I shouldn't thoroughly enjoy having a chat with Prince Friskovitch?"

"I humbly apologize. Knowing you as I do, I should not imagine anything of the sort. Nevertheless, His Serene Highness' enjoyment might not be equal to yours. It is just within the pale of possibility that he may have the bad taste to prefer eighteen to sixty-four. I should, myself, were I in his place."

"Oh, you! You're a regular Don Juan; and, what's worse, old age does not improve you—quite the contrary. Miss Dawkins has completely turned your head. It would be pitiable if it were not so ludicrous. Somehow or other I distrust that girl. She has such an impudent way of flattering the men up, and of making eyes at them right before their wives."

"Surely it's more straightforward than doing it behind our amiable consorts' backs?"

"It may be more straightforward, but in my opinion it's a good bit more impertinent. Not one woman in a hundred will stand

having her nose put out of joint by another. I won't, that's very certain, and I tell you so to your face. So be careful what you're about."

"My dear, I flatter myself that I am a model of prudence, and if I fail to come up to your standard of masculine perfection I am sure it is not for want of correction. No man ever had his faults more clearly and forcibly pointed out to him. As principal of a reformatory you would have made your fortune."

"Hullo, Hetty!" exclaimed Mrs. Davidson, in answer to this speech. "Here's the coach. Are you all ready? for it will not do to keep Sir North waiting."

"Yes, mamma, quite ready," answered the girl, flinging a light wrap over her arm to be used on the homeward drive. "Good-bye; I'm not sure but what you've got the best of it this hot afternoon." She did not think so in her secret heart, but she said the words in order to try and allay her mother's irritable discontent. "I'll tell you all the news on my return."

"Mind you do!" Mrs. Davidson called out. "And Hetty——"

"Yes, mamma—what is it?"

"If you should happen to meet His Serene Highness Prince Friskovitch, and to have any conversation with him, you might manage to let him know—quite incidentally, of course, but still conveying the fact to his mind—that I am a very nice, presentable sort of person, accustomed to polite society, and not the least out of my element in it. I confess that I should dearly like to make His Highness' acquaintance, if only to crow over that odious, tuft-hunting Mrs. Brown when I get back to Manchester. Do you remember what ridiculous airs she gives herself about some penniless French Countess she met when she was last in Paris? It is enough to make one sick; and nothing would afford me greater pleasure than to cap her wretched Countess with my Prince."

"I'm afraid I shan't be able to help you much," said Hetty, trying to conceal the repulsion produced by her mother's speech. "Prince Friskovitch is not likely to single me out in future. Now that the tournament is over, the probabilities are he will entirely forget the existence of so insignificant an individual as myself."

"They say he is wonderful at remembering faces he has once seen. Of course, if you can't, you can't, and there's an end of the matter. But if you get a chance of introducing me, I count upon

you to do so. And Hetty, be sure and say that I'm Mrs. Davidson of Murchiston Hall. It always sounds so much better to tack on the name of one's place. I notice people in society frequently do it, and there's no doubt that it confers a great deal of distinction. If you say Mrs. Davidson alone, folk are not impressed; whereas the Murchiston Hall produces a very considerable effect. You won't forget this, will you, Hetty, for it is important?"

"No, certainly not," said the girl, with all the gravity she could command, for her sense of the ridiculous was fully aroused by now, and had even conquered certain sentiments of disgust. "I'll give you an excellent character in every way—that is if I get the chance."

Whereupon she administered to both parents a duty kiss, passing her embroidered handkerchief surreptitiously across her face when it was bestowed. Then she tripped hastily down the stairs, followed at a more leisurely pace by Mr. Davidson.

The coach was standing in the sunshine, drawn up before the hotel. Sir North Penywern sat on the box seat, wearing a blue coat with brass buttons, and a white hat, beneath which his rosy face shone with a ruddy glow that presented a fine contrast of colour. He looked exceedingly business-like as he flicked away the flies from his leaders' quarters with a light application of his long lash, catching it and twisting it again so dexterously as to proclaim that he was an old hand at the game, and had driven many a team. By his side sat Mrs. Northcote, who, in her quiet way, looked very happy; and on the seat immediately behind, Amelia Dawkins, North Penywern and Lord Charles Mountgard had ensconced themselves. The rear of the coach was occupied by a young lady possessing a high colour, a full bust, a large fringe and a tiny waist, which had earned her the reputation of being a beauty. Without her corsets and her hair she could not have laid claim to such high dignity, but the world is very sheep-like, and nine times out of ten will accept any verdict that is forced upon it. Miss Mattie Windlesham was seated between two tow-haired youths, and from her incessant giggling appeared to be enjoying herself extremely.

As for the horses, they were very goodly to look upon. All four were that best of colours, dark chestnut, with white legs and stars on their foreheads. They possessed great quality, the wheelers in addition being particularly strong, and compactly put

together. They were of the nice old-fashioned stamp, gradually becoming rarer and rarer, and stood on splendid legs, with plenty of bone; short from the knee downwards. Their bodies were round and well-ribbed, their tails cut short, with spreading hair and elevated docks. Click, click, went their bits; and a cloud of dust flew up as they pawed impatiently at the white road. And all the time the hot, relentless sun poured down its fierce rays on their glossy coats, making them shine like satin, whilst the neat brass harness glittered to such an extent that it was quite painful to the eye to dwell upon for more than a second. Two well-appointed English grooms stood at the heads of the leaders, preventing them from rubbing blinkers together, and patting their broad intelligent brows.

"Well, young lady," called out Sir North in a jovial voice directly Hetty stepped upon the pavement. "Here you are—good girl not to keep me waiting, though we are starting in any amount of time. Can you climb up?"

Meanwhile Lord Charles had jumped to the ground with surprising agility, and held the coach ladder in position for Hetty to mount. She did so cautiously, and his Lordship seemed to think that her fresh blue petticoats demanded immense care; for he busied himself about them in the most anxious manner, until rewarded by a peep of two charming kid boots, and two ravishing little ankles above them. In fact those ankles, quite unknown to the owner, did deadly execution, and created a lasting impression on the gentleman's heart. Even boots and stockings can inspire that famous passion called Love, of which poets sing, and ordinary mortals rave. On what does it depend, since hosiery and shoe-leather are quite capable of arousing it? Never was there a more difficult question to answer.

As soon as Hetty was comfortably seated, Sir North cracked his whip, and as they rattled gaily down the Luisen Strasse, his son and heir executed a series of cheery flourishes on the horn. The splinter bar jingled, the horses stepped out bravely with strong, steady action, moving their hocks well under them, and the occupants of the coach realized severally, that they were started on a long and happy afternoon's pleasuring. As they bowled along at a good ten miles an hour, their spirits rose. The young people laughed and chatted with a freedom both natural and pleasant to witness, since it arose from pure light-heartedness.

They were evidently conscious that no uncongenial elements likely to mar their enjoyment were to be feared in the shape of over-strained severity and sour propriety. They had no grumpy old men to contend with, nor starched females, jealous and indignant because the girls received more attention than themselves. Tongues wagged fast, and many were the jokes exchanged, the peals of laughter uttered. Only one drawback existed to this delightful drive, and that was the dust. Owing to the dry weather, it rose in suffocating clouds from the white road, producing amongst the gentlemen an unslakable thirst. All the magnificent apple, pear, and cherry trees that bordered the highway were thickly coated over, and leaves and grass were alike grey, shorn of their freshness and verdure. But after all, this was only a minor inconvenience, that gave rise to an amiable exchange of civilities amongst the young people. The astute North had taken the precaution to secrete a clothes-brush in his pocket, and with this they brushed each other clean, the operation being invariably attended by much merriment, produced by comical mistakes which had to be rectified with exceeding care and deliberation on the part of the gentlemen.

In spite of similar mishaps, the ten miles between Homburg and Frankfort seemed quickly to come to an end, thanks to those four spirited chestnuts, whose high courage was only equalled by their looks. The suburbs of the town appeared beautifully cool and green. Numbers of fine white houses lay gleaming amongst verdant trees, their closed Venetian shutters lending them a foreign air of mystery and repose. Everywhere space and foliage abounded, bestowing beauty on the city, and causing it to compare favourably with the dark and densely populated streets of England's murky capital. They passed by numerous large shops and hotels, and finally pulled up before the Café Casino with the intention of watering the horses, and of reserving a table for dinner capable of seating all their party. This important part of the programme attended to, the gentlemen refreshed themselves with liquor, whilst the ladies, offering a very weak refusal, were easily persuaded to toy with an ice. After a delay of a few minutes, Sir North, who, meantime had made inquiries as to the road, clambered on to the box seat, and took up the reins. Once more started, they passed out of the city by an old-fashioned gate which led to a fine bridge that spanned the river Maine. Soon the open

country was reached. As usual it was flat, highly cultivated and abundantly planted with walnut and fruit trees. A few vehicles of various sorts were discernible going in the same direction, but there was no crowd, as would assuredly have been the case at any English race-meeting held so near to a thriving and populous town. One missed the gigs, the pony-traps, and donkey-carts, the numberless breaks, and carriages of every description. Sir North Penywern's coach kept along the straight white road for something over two miles. This road was adorned on either side by a row of fine poplars, which served in a measure to break the warmth of the sun's rays that every moment grew hotter and hotter. They were close to the course now, as proclaimed by the presence of a few trudging pedestrians with moist and scarlet faces. Before long they turned down a narrow lane to the right, when the Grand Stand became visible. It was a large and imposing-looking building capable of accommodating several thousand people. At the carriage entrance they were stopped by an official, who promptly demanded the fee for the coach and four horses. Sir North fumbled first in one receptacle, then in another, and eventually produced the amount, which was larger apparently than he had expected, although he knew uncommonly well, from experience, that the owner of a coach must ever be ready to put his hand into his pocket, and that expenses are apt to mount up in a manner impossible to calculate beforehand. As if anxious to proclaim their nationality, the gallant chestnuts bowled on to the course in style, picking their legs up smartly and stepping well together in quick active fashion.

To English eyes the whole scene presented a curiously unfamiliar spectacle. There were the several stands, admission to which was of various prices. The Paddock, the Course, the Winning Post, and Judge's box also occupied prominent positions, but where, oh where were the people? Where were the good-humoured roughs, the army of betting men, great and small, the keen striplings, and the enthusiastic veterans whose love of sport age cannot efface, the grooms, the stable-helpers, the songsters and tipsters, gipsies, strollers, tumblers and acrobats who throng to a race-course at home? One looked for them in vain. They were conspicuous only by their absence. In their place were quiet vendors, clad in broad hats and white linen coats, who handed about large trays covered with glasses of foaming beer,

and modest plates of crusty rolls and flaccid gingerbreads that stuck pertinaciously to one another. These men plied a lively trade, beer being particularly in request, and the gingerbreads also coming in for their fair share of favour. Running parallel with the course and similar to it in appearance was an inclosed tract of ground, and here all the coachmen congregated, after having first deposited their masters and mistresses at the entrance of the Grand Stand. One of the chief sights of the afternoon was to see them drive their elegantly-appointed vehicles up and down. Many were extremely well turned out. Victorias seemed the favourite carriages, with splendidly-stepping horses that could not have been purchased under three or four hundred guineas the pair. Frankfort is universally known to be a wealthy city, and a large proportion of the rich Jews who reside there have a perfect passion for horseflesh. There were buggies, too, and gigs, landaus and barouches. In short, quite a fine show. The sun beat down upon all with impartial warmth, lending them a gay and bright appearance, whilst the thirsty coachmen regaled themselves liberally with beer. They seemed animated by a spirit of friendly rivalry, and evidently considered that their business was to keep up a kind of trotting parade, for their own immediate glory, and the edification of the ladies and gentlemen already assembled in the stand. Few thought of seeking a shady nook for their horses, who, between the flies and the glaring heat, were sorely tried. But then men who think more of their horses than their vanity are rare. Not a breath stirred the leaves of the few trees that shadowed the course. They hung pendant and motionless, and literally seemed to change colour as the fierce golden sunbeams poured down upon them, robbing them of their moisture and sap. The valley of the Maine is several degrees hotter than Homburg, which, besides being plentifully wooded, lies at a higher altitude. Most of the ladies in the Grand Stand were provided with huge fans, which they plied vigorously. The Frankfort races were evidently more patronized by the rich than by the poorer portion of the population. Victoria after victoria came driving up, containing a smartly-dressed lady, in the height of the fashion, accompanied by a small, sallow, Jewish-looking husband, who no doubt made up in quality for what he wanted in size. But, as before stated, one missed the crowd, the noise and bustle of an English race meeting, and it must be confessed,

the general effect was dull—dull as ditch-water. There seemed an oppressive want of life, of “go” about the proceedings. They were tame, demure and spiritless to a degree. One felt that the innate love of horseflesh was wanting, which characterizes every little meeting in a country like Ireland, or a county like Yorkshire.

The Frankforters were waking up slowly, but as regarded Sport, they were still generations and generations behind the race-loving inhabitants of Great Britain. That was the true solution of their apathy, and lack of enthusiasm.

CHAPTER XXIII.

INSPECTING THE COURSE.

IT still wanted a full hour until the time fixed for the races to begin. Sir North therefore proposed luncheon, a suggestion most favourably received, and the company agreed, that after that important meal was over, all those who chose should walk round the steeplechase course, or at any rate part of it, and personally inspect the fences. In an incredibly short space of time they were busily engaged in eating cold chicken, pigeon pie, galantine and various other delicacies customary on such occasions. Champagne corks popped merrily, and the demand for soda water was even greater than the supply, owing to an unquenchable thirst, which had already developed itself among the gentlemen.

Whilst every one was thus engaged in the pleasing occupation of eating and drinking, a medium-sized, slenderly-made man went by, wearing a jockey's cap, and a long brown great-coat. He looked up at the coach and nodded familiarly to its owner.

“Holloa! O'Hagan,” called out jolly old Sir North. “How do, old man? Come and have a bite. There's plenty of lunch going.”

“Thanks, awfully. But it always upsets me if I take a meal before riding a race. I'm downright hungry, yet I don't dare break my fast until the important event is over. A drink, however, is another thing, and if you will offer me one I shall be only too glad to accept it.”

So saying, Jerry O'Hagan joined his friends crowding round

the temporary table erected at the back of the coach, and tossed off a remarkably liberal allowance of champagne, a beverage to which the unkind said he was somewhat too freely addicted.

"Well," said Sir North, who had descended from his perch, "what do you think of the course? Have you had a look at it?"

"Yes, I've just been round," answered O'Hagan. "That," with a merry wink, "is what makes me so thirsty."

"And what is your report? I suppose the race-ground is different from any you've been accustomed to?"

"Different, I should think it was, indeed!" exclaimed Jerry, emphatically. "Without exception, it's the rummest course I ever saw in my life."

"Ah! I thought it would make you open your eyes a bit," rejoined Sir North, who, like Mr. Davidson, entertained a firm belief in the superiority of everything British, and obstinately refused to admit the possibility of excellence in anything foreign.

"It's enough to make one's grandmother start out of her grave," returned Mr. O'Hagan, speaking in the strong brogue that he generally adopted when excited. "Why, the whole place is covered with sand, coarse grass, weeds, thistles, wild flowers and heather, and is about as even as a freshly-ploughed field. The turf is as dead as dead can be. There's not a bit of spring about it, and in my opinion the horses will find their work cut out to get along."

"And yet how dry the weather has been lately," observed Sir North. "We have not had a drop of rain for the last fortnight."

"No amount of dryness would ever succeed in turning that course into a light one. Nothing rides so heavy as sand. I remember riding a race once on just such a soil as this, and before we had gone half way round, every single horse was beaten. When it came to the finish, none of them could raise more than a trot. As for the fences here—but perhaps you have seen them?"

"No," said Sir North, "we are going on a tour of inspection as soon as everybody has lunched, and intend to form our own opinions of the jumps."

"Ha, ha! They'll make you laugh. It's really worth coming

all this way if only to see them. There's a thing the aborigines call the 'Irischer' wall, which is enough to split one's sides. It's literally no more than a great, loose mound of earth, thrown up anyhow, and resembles nothing so much as a rubbish heap, with a tiny gutter, not a foot wide, nor six inches deep, on either side. The so-called 'barrière' is also simply ridiculous ; it consists of three thin planks of wood nailed together, the height being about three feet, if as much ; whilst the Wasser Graben, or water-jump, is a mere ditch, which any decent thirteen-hand pony could clear."

"That certainly doesn't sound very formidable," said Sir North, with one of his genial laughs. "You're pretty sure of winning, ain't you, Jerry?"

"I've come all this way on purpose to catch the judge's eye," was the confident reply. "And if you know what can beat me, it's more than I do. For one thing, the Field is dwindling down to nothing at all. These German chaps lose their courage when it comes to the point."

He spoke with a perfect ignorance of the Teutonic character, but want of knowledge did not prevent him from laying down hard and fast rules. Our countrymen's vast confidence in their own superiority over the rest of the world renders them more self-assertive than lovable.

"What about a horse called Adare?" inquired Sir North. "Some people seem to think well of him."

"Do they? Then they're very poor judges, that's all I can say. He's walking about the paddock now, smothered in hair, and I'm told that a great, hulking officer in uniform is to ride him. With such a jockey he won't have a chance."

"I'm delighted to hear it," returned Sir North, bringing the palm of his hand sharply down on the table in front of him by way of expressing his satisfaction, "for, like a fool, I went and bid the gigantic Prussian 500 to 50 that you would win."

"You won't make a fortune by my success, Sir North. But your money is quite safe ; just as safe, indeed, as if it were in the Bank of England. I've lumped on the stuff myself, which is a thing I very rarely do, unless tolerably confident of my mount. To the best of my knowledge, Sans Coins is a really good, honest horse, and his owner assures me he can stay all day. The only fault I find with him is, that he is a trifle on the big side for my

ideas of perfect condition. At the same time, I rode him a gallop yesterday morning, and he went first-rate. To tell the truth, as between friends, my belief is, we have nothing to fear. Did you ever see a German who could ride?"

"No, never. I am inclined to doubt if there are half-a-dozen fellows out of the whole nation who can distinguish themselves between the flags. A cavalry charge is much more in their line."

"That, my dear Sir North, is precisely my opinion. Without undue vanity, I think I may be permitted to express a conviction that Sans Coins will have the advantage of being piloted by the most experienced jockey present. We're *meant*, at any rate, which is one great point in our favour."

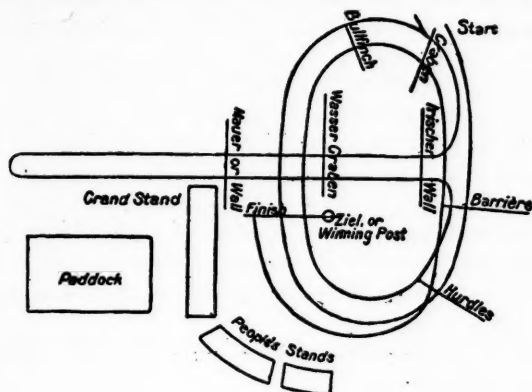
So saying, the sanguine Jerry turned a reassuring smile upon his friend, and moved off in the direction of the paddock. Sir North then gathered his chickens under his wing, and took them to have a look at the fences, so lightly esteemed by the redoubtable Mr. O'Hagan. Ever since their arrival on the race-course, Hetty had vainly sought to discern Karl. Time slipped away, and precious hours were being wasted. She grew more and more disappointed at his not coming to speak to her. A coach was such a big thing; besides, it was the only one there, and if he had taken the trouble to look, surely he might have seen her. Thus she reasoned, whilst the fresh brilliancy and sparkle of her gaiety gradually wore off, leaving a sense of unconquerable depression in their place. Added to this, Lord Charles bored her. His attentions were so unceasing, and he was not sensible enough to see on how many occasions she would willingly have dispensed with them. Why is it that the fruit out of reach invariably seems nicer than that close at hand? She was rapidly leaving the flattered stage behind and entering into the far less pleasant one of secret irritability. All she wanted now was to be quiet and to think of Karl, and, instead, there was Lord Charles pretty well glued to her side, peering sentimentally into her face, quite without occasion, and making furious love whenever the slightest opening presented itself. The openings appeared to come very often, too, and each one annoyed her more than the last. A great many difficulties already loomed ahead; for her parents were certain to back him up against her. That was a foregone conclusion, and poor Karl would not even be allowed a fair hearing. Yet who could compare the two men? They were not to

be spoken of in the same breath. In her situation, however, it was no easy task to fight one's battles alone. Old people had such a hard, grinding, practical way about them, especially where anything in the shape of romance was concerned. The only means she could think of calculated to prevent Lord Charles from proposing, and warding off a climax, was to suppress him unmercifully, and this she did as much as she dared.

Strange to say, such ungracious treatment produced an exactly opposite effect to that intended. His lordship had been so much accustomed to being run after by enterprising young ladies and their eager mammas, that he found it quite a refreshing change to meet with a girl who did not make up to him, and who, on the contrary, rather snubbed him than otherwise. He accepted his snubbing as a delightful evidence of innocence and unworldliness, and prophesied that it would leave off once they were regularly married. Remember that he was still under twenty-five, or his prognostications would most likely have been less sanguine. Also, if Hetty, instead of being pretty, had been plain, the probabilities are, that he would not have borne quite so good-humouredly with some of her sayings. As it was, they only added fuel to the fire of his adoration.

When Mr. O'Hagan had expressed himself in somewhat disdainful terms of the Frankfort race-course, there was, undoubtedly, good reason for his remarks. Anything more unlike an English one, it would be difficult to imagine. Of nice, springy turf, the ground did not possess a yard the whole way round. The soil, as Mr. O'Hagan had justly observed, consisted entirely of loose, porous sand, thickly overgrown with coarse grass, thistles, buttercups and nettles, interspersed by an occasional clump of purple heather that, somehow, looked strangely out of place. The steeplechase course, in particular, was singularly rough and uneven, and appeared finely adapted to test the staying powers of all those horses who ran over it. As a matter of fact, a ploughed field was a joke to it. Sir North and his party, after their hearty luncheon, quickly discovered this. The blazing noonday sun, now just at its hottest, robbed them of strength and energy, making a shady seat stand out mentally as the one object to be desired; and whilst their thoughts were thus occupied, their feet sank deep into the heavy sand, converting pedestrian exercise into a work of real labour. Fortunately for our particular friends,

they had not to go far in order to see the principal fences. Being somewhat intricate, the plan of the course is here subjoined, for the benefit of those who take an interest in racing matters.



It will thus be seen that, starting at the far side of the course, the horses went once completely round it, then, turning to the right, they crossed the middle of the field, where were the Irish Bank and Water Jump, and faced almost straight for the Grand Stand. This they galloped by, leaving it on the left, and ran a long narrow loop into the country, where they were practically free from supervision. They next retraced their footsteps over the starting field, taking the chief fences as before, only approaching them from an opposite direction, which brought them once more to the original point of departure. But their journey was not over yet; and they had to go round once and a half again before the Winning-post was reached. Considering the holding nature of the ground, the course was both a long and tiring one. The wooden "barrière," the Irish Bank, and the "Wasser Graben," or Water Jump, were close to each other, and in full view of the Stand. Truth to tell, they did not look very formidable to people accustomed to Liverpool, the Vale of Aylesbury, etc. Any ordinary run with fox-hounds would have necessitated taking dozens of far bigger fences. The water jump, indeed, did not deserve to be dignified by an appellation conveying so great a sense of respect to the mind. It was literally nothing more than a ditch in which, with much coaxing, a little moisture

had gathered. In its shallow depths shone a wet sediment that the sun was trying very hard to lick up. To define its size accurately, this stagnant and artificial trench was not more than eight, or, at the most, ten feet wide; and the only interest attaching to it consisted in the fact that as the horses approached it the second time round, they were asked to face the water the reverse way, and without the usual low hedge, intended to make them rise as they took off. On the whole the Barrière, perhaps, deserved the prize for eccentricity. It differed from our timber palings in this respect, since, instead of the human and equine chasers being able to see between the bars, they were nailed together, so as to exclude every streak of daylight from peeping through. As, however, the celebrated Barrière was not more than three feet high, it really signified very little how it was constructed.

When Sir North came to the "Irischer Wall" he laughed as if he should explode.

"Upon my word," he said, "this beats anything I ever saw in my life. Call this a steeplechase course? No wonder our friend Jerry turned up his nose at it. I am astonished he consented to ride; but suppose, if the truth were known, there's just a little bit of vanity at the bottom of the affair. Well! And I don't blame him either. If I were fifteen or twenty years younger, I should take quite as great a pleasure in showing these foreigners how to ride a race as does Jerry."

"The fences are nothing," observed Lord Charles. "A donkey could canter over them with ease; but, all the same, the course is an uncommonly trying one. This sandy stuff rides infernally heavy, and, if I mistake not, the distance—6,000 mètres—is pretty well equivalent to four English miles. I'm not a betting-man, but all I know is this, if I were, I should most decidedly pin my faith on the best stayer, and not allow my eye to be caught by speed alone."

"You've hit the right nail on the head, Charlie, my boy, with the exception that you have not sufficiently considered the difficulty of finding out, amongst a number of horses, which *is* the best stayer. It's not so easy for an outsider to tell, appearances, as we all know, being very deceitful at times. For my own part, I should not be particularly surprised to see the favourite upset to-day."

"Come, come, Sir North," said Lord Charles cheerily, "you must not forsake your own countrymen. What do you say to coming to the Paddock and having a look round? The Steeplechase is printed last on the list, so we shall have any amount of time, and if we are fortunate we may get a nice quiet peep at Adare."

"Aye, very likely," returned Sir North. "I'm rather surprised they did not place the Steeplechase somewhat higher on the card, but left it to the final race. A good many people will be setting their faces homewards before it has even begun. By Jingo! it's hot." And the cheery old gentleman removed his white hat from the white head beneath it, which he freely mopped with a bright-coloured silk handkerchief.

Whilst their host adjourned to the Paddock, the ladies, who were somewhat exhausted by their exertions, gladly returned to the coach, from whence they watched carriage after carriage bowl up and down the course. An excitement soon presented itself in the shape of a large break that dashed up to the Stand in Royal style, thanks to the united efforts of four smart-stepping bay horses. The break was occupied by His Serene Highness Prince Friskovitch, who, with Mrs. Patman on one side, a well-known racing duchess on the other, and Mrs. Crown-Shuffer seated exactly *vis-à-vis*, looked positively beaming. Certainly, with so many beautiful ladies all competing for favour, he managed them most wonderfully, especially when it is considered that the fair sex decidedly preponderated, and their beaus consisted exclusively of Lord O'Banashee and a couple of meek-looking equerries. But His Highness was wise in his generation. He liked keeping his friends to himself, and had cultivated to perfection the art of making his little gallantries go further than those of a dozen ordinary men. But then they had not the advantage of having a Serene Highness tacked to their name, which unfortunate omission detracted enormously, not only from their wit, but also from their powers of pleasing. The pretty dears were almost better content to hear Prince Friskovitch say, "Good morning, Mrs. X., fine day," than for an individual who possessed no blue blood in his veins to exclaim, "I adore you."

The ladies knew how to sustain their own dignity, and therefore the Duchess, the Australian belle, and the lively poetess, who had sent Mr. Crown-Shuffer on a voyage round the world in

order to keep him quiet, if not exactly cordial to each other, were at all events civil when the Prince was by. He was a marvellous peacemaker, and tied some astonishingly ugly knots. The Duchess of Bettingirl, who would not have opened her mouth to that social pariah Mrs. Crown-Shuffer on an every-day occasion, got up quite an animated conversation about the weather; Mrs. Patman, in her turn, suddenly developed a burning interest in matters connected with literature; whilst Mrs. Crown-Shuffer volunteered all sorts of miscellaneous information just as freely and frankly as if in her heart of hearts she believed her rival's flattering curiosity to be genuine. Lord O'Banashee was in his normal happy condition when basking in the rays of Royalty, and busied himself about the ladies, supplementing his patron's pretty speeches, and taking care they should never lose anything by the re-telling. To do him justice he was exceedingly useful, for whenever the Prince paused for an ornate word, he invariably supplied the required article.

The Stand was now fairly dotted with ladies and gentlemen, who sat about in clusters on the lawn, or else promenaded up and down, stopping to shake hands with their acquaintances. The arrival of Prince Friskovitch created quite a little stir among the Frankfort beauties, all of whom looked forward to the supreme delight of catching His Serene Highness's eye, and perhaps effecting an introduction. They walked past the corner where he had ensconced himself, some with mincing, conscious gait, others with languishing looks, and others again with seductive smiles. But they had to deal with a formidable opponent, already fully established.

La Crown-Shuffer was in one of her most diverting, and consequently least proper, moods. She carried everything before her. The Duchess, it is true, had Lord O'Banashee to fall back upon, but poor Mrs. Patman was nowhere. She vowed that never again would she subject herself to such humiliation, that she would not be made a cat's-paw of, etc., etc., when lo! a smile from the Prince, a low whisper in her ear, a tender glance shot straight into the depths of her dark eyes, allayed her growing wrath, just as water kills fire, and once more rendered her a helpless, even although not a totally blind victim, to His Serene Highness's charms. After all, he was Prince Friskovitch, and unless you went in for women's rights, female suffrage, and were as ugly

as sin, and as old as the hills, it was simply impossible to resist him. He had such an extraordinary knack of conquering hearts. With such a gift it was against the laws of common-sense to expect His Serene Highness to content himself with a single conquest. It required dozens, nay, hundreds, of lesser hearts to fill the mighty cavity of his one enormous organ. Mrs. Patman smiled back bewilderingly, and directly her host re-addressed himself to the fascinating and entertaining poetess, sighed heavily. If she could only make up her mind to part with the lingering remnants of her self-respect, she was aware that she too might be on the same easy footing ; but, foolish, flattered, childish as she was, she shrank from giving up the last sheet anchors by which she was held. A child's sweet lisping voice, the artless prattle of her baby boy, with his curly locks and big brown eyes, and merry laughing face, kept her from crossing the borderland of folly and entering the domain of sin. If, when her son grew up, he should learn to be ashamed of his own mother, then not even the attentions of all the princes in the world would compensate her for what she had fooled away. She was a shrewd, and in the main a good little woman, and already the influences of her early simple life began to reassert their force. If she had married a husband who would have loved and protected her, as she deserved to be loved and protected, then she would never have flung herself headlong into the arms of Frivolity, seeking to find joy there, which was not joy, but only spurious and degrading excitement. She laughed, she talked, she smiled at the Prince whenever she got a chance, and was amiability itself to the favourite of the day, but her heart ached. Ah ! yes, poor little woman, it ached, and a furious longing possessed her to get away from Homburg, to leave all the dress and the striving, the competition and gossip, back-biting, jealousy and abuse behind. Oh, to be once more in her child's nursery, feeling his soft curls mingling with her own, to look into his bright clear eyes, that had not an evil thought in them, to see the sweep of his long eyelashes resting on his smooth young cheeks ! That was pleasure of the right sort. Pleasure without alloy ; but not this, when all your foulest passions seemed aroused within you, and you stood aghast at the suddenly revealed depths of evil to which you might descend. No, the good, the pure, the simple and innocent, were the true landmarks by which a woman should shape her life. Dress, vanity,

the craving for men's admiration, the giddy round which constitutes Society, these things could not make her either better or nobler. They filled her mind with petty thoughts, petty aims, petty objects, and stimulated the baser, rather than the higher side of her nature. Poor little Mrs. Patman! Resembling the majority of her sex, she knew Wrong from Right, but she found that it required tremendous energy and never-failing effort to tread the narrow path without a strong man's arm to help her along, and pull her through the briars of Life. And this she had not. Her husband suffered from delirium tremens, and whenever they were together, she was in bodily fear of his doing her some grievous harm. Like most women at whom their safe and prosperous sisters cast stones, she was more to be pitied than blamed. For us poor faulty creatures to presume to judge our fellows is, apart from all question of charity, a cruel want of common sense. Granted so-and-so has erred against the social laws which civilization in slow process of Time has evolved. When do we ever know all the secret motives by which that person was actuated, the circumstances that led him or her astray, the quality or fibre of certain cerebral molecules, the particular processes of thought, and last, but by no means least, the hereditary tendencies transmitted, possibly through a long course of mentally and physically diseased ancestors? Are all these things to count for nothing? Are men and women to be judged as if they stood alone like original creations, and were not, as they truly are, part and parcel of the great misty past, living links on the chain of Eternity? Let us be kind, then, if we can. When we stand face to face with our Creator, I wonder how many of us will regret our acts of kindness, in proportion to those of selfishness, meanness and hardheartedness. We do not often repent having saved some poor sinner from ruin, having given him a few pounds and a respectable chance in life, but when the white wings of Death swoop nearer and nearer around us, blotting out our feeble faculties, then the things that we ought to have done, and have not done, possess an ugly knack of rising up before us like accusing angels.

Mrs. Patman sighed and chattered by turns. So goes the world. If people weren't afraid to let their neighbours see the good that is in them, oftentimes one's standard of human nature would be raised. It is such a hard thing for a young, bright girl

to make a bad start in life, and find she has married a vicious man, or one not suitable to her. There are women who are heroines, for they keep their sufferings to themselves ; but others must have an outlet. It is only nature. They are not strong enough to stand alone ; and so, meaning no harm, they take to amusement, folly and distraction. Mrs. Patman belonged to this latter class. She was bright, charming and intelligent, but not *femme forte*. Everybody can't be, and to no one is rigid moral courage harder than to a pretty young woman. She has so many temptations.

It was now past two o'clock—the opening race being fixed for three—and the Stand was fairly sprinkled with ladies and gentlemen, the former very elegantly attired ; but the space apportioned to the multitude remained empty as heretofore, and it was clear they did not intend honouring the meeting with their presence. Evidently the townspeople and shopkeepers were not endowed with sporting tastes, but preferred the routine of ordinary business life. Amongst the few who appeared, there was not a vestige of enthusiasm. Incredible as it may seem, there were no black, moving clouds to be swept off the race-course by mounted policemen. In fact, a staid, flatter fixture it would have been hard to find the whole world over. The stillness was almost funereal. It had an oppressive effect on the nerves which rendered the champ, champ of the horses' bits and the jangling of their harness a positive relief. A word of recognition was due to the sun. It *did* shine, trying its very hardest to turn the whole affair into a success. Yet somehow it could not succeed. It burned too fiercely and tropically for comfort ; and though its rays played bravely on the yellow sand and coarse herbage, bringing out the rich purple bloom of the heather, and the gold-enamelled leaves of the tall over-grown buttercups, the effect was glaring ; and the eye, gazing hour after hour on the quivering air, longed with a hungry longing for some grateful shade. The sky presented one cloudless vault of blue. Not a thing relieved its deep serenity.

Our friends on the coach soon found that the only way of enduring the heat was not to exert themselves. As long as they sat still with their parasols up, they could bear it, and the gentlemen slunk inside, where, as Amelia laughingly observed, they were reduced to the exciting game of pitch and toss. But,

as the time for the first race drew near and word went round that the numbers were up, the young men once more ventured to expose their delicate persons to the noonday orb. Amelia most kindly offered her parasol to North Penywern, declaring that she could quite well do without it, but that manly gentleman, seizing an umbrella—somebody else's, of course—heroically refused to deprive her of so important an adjunct to a lady's toilette.

"How good he is!" said Amelia to herself as he marched off, brandishing his father's cherished green silk, silver-sticked property. "He never thinks of himself—so unlike most of his sex!"

Needless to remark, she was in love.

CHAPTER XXIV.

HETTY'S HEARTACHE GETS CURED.

AND now, one by one the horses for the first race came out. Although there were nineteen entries, the Field was very small, and consisted only of five competitors, two of whom were from the Royal Stud. It was a two-year-old affair, the distance being but a thousand metres. The race was run in almost dead silence. The humbler people looked on with absolute indifference, and appeared to take a far more active interest in the smart carriages and champing horses that continued to trot up and down. Even when "Nordwind" won in a canter, not a cheer was raised. His victory was looked upon as a foregone conclusion. Indeed, after three or four more flat races had been got through, our countrymen woke up to the fact that whenever any animals belonging to the Royal Stud competed one of them invariably bore away the prize. Meanwhile Hetty, who was getting more and more tired of Lord Charles' attentions, gladly assented to a proposition that they should find seats in the Grand Stand, over which the shadows were now beginning to creep, as the sun became hidden behind the tall poplars in its rear. Consequently most of the party deserted the coach, which remained in full sunshine.

Hetty looked on all sides for Karl. She could not think where he had gone, or how he had managed to escape her sharp-sighted vision. Keenly as she had watched the occupants of the Grand Stand through her opera-glasses, she deemed it possible that he might be there. But much to her disappointment, Karl was nowhere visible, and it really began to look as if he were absent-

ing himself on purpose. She was getting quite angry with her martial hero; for, she argued, "if he had cared to find me, he could have done so fast enough, but he thinks far more of a nasty horse than he does of me. Heigh ho! It's ridiculous setting him up as a hero. He's only a man, after all." From which it may be seen that Miss Hetty was a trifle unreasonable. For if the poor thing were only created a man, it was undoubtedly hard on him to be elevated to the rank of a demigod. But herein young girls are often very foolish. They expect perfection from a faulty—very faulty—piece of clay, and then cry out when they are disappointed. If they did not look upon the first man who makes love to them as a Prince, a King, a petty Deity, their illusions might not disappear with quite such cruel celerity. There are faults on both sides. Eager expectation on the one—a stubborn clinging to self on the other. And the result brings trouble in an inconceivable number of cases. Prince Friskovitch came up and spoke a few words, which flattered Hetty's vanity, but did not still the pain at her heart. Amongst other things, His Highness stated that Lord O'Banashee proposed issuing invitations for a garden-party which he intended giving on the following Monday, and expressed a hope that Miss Davidson and Miss Dawkins would both be present.

"I am not quite sure that my mother will let me come without her, Sir," said Hetty, doubtfully.

"Oh nonsense! I'll send O'Banashee to call and get him to smooth over all difficulties. The garden-party wouldn't be any fun at all if the young ladies were made to bring their mammas to look after them."

With a cheery laugh and a friendly shake of the hand, Prince Friskovitch returned to the comfortable chair by Mrs. Crown-Shuffer's side, which he had occupied most of the afternoon. Hetty went and leant against the railings, feeling slightly cheered by Royalty's condescending notice, but yet disconsolate at Karl's prolonged non-appearance. She stood there, gazing dreamily into space, and rejoicing in the relief of Lord Charles' absence, when a suave voice from outside said:

"Ah! there you are, Miss Davidson, I have found you at last."

"You've been an uncommonly long time in doing so," she answered reproachfully, glancing at the blond face peering with approving eyes into her own.

"Ach!" exclaimed Karl—for it was he—looking thoroughly harassed; "don't speak to me of it. I have been on thorns all day long. I thought of you—I wanted to get away so much—so much; and yet that terrible fellow Von Oelschlaeger kept me pinned by his side. I assure you, I have this instant only made my escape."

That was quite enough excuse for Hetty. All at once a wave of sunshine flooded her heart, and she asked for nothing better than to forgive her poor worried darling, who, it was gratifying to find, had not enjoyed *himself* any more than she had enjoyed *herself*.

"You see," she said, with a smile, looking down at her blue frock, "I have kept my promise."

"Ach! Yes, I see, and also how divine you are. If it were possible, even more so than usual."

"I am glad you like your colours. But why don't you come inside the stand? We could talk so much more comfortably," she said, in softly insinuating accents.

He shrugged his shoulders with a deprecating gesture that affected Hetty infinitely.

"You forget. I have but seventy-five pounds yearly of your English money to live upon, and a ticket costs ten marks—more than three dinners."

"Oh! I beg your pardon," said Hetty, flushing crimson. "I'm so sorry! It was so stupid of me not to have remembered."

"You needn't apologize," he returned, with a calmness which she construed as another sign of the magnanimity of his disposition. "People in Germany are quite accustomed to being poor. They are not like the English, who despise even their own countrymen when they are badly off."

Hetty thought it very noble of him to tell her so quietly and straightforwardly that he was not rich. The knowledge failed to alter her sentiments in the slightest degree. She loved him for himself—for his strong, straight limbs, flat back, broad chest and blue eyes, and not for what he had got.

"Shall I come out?" she suggested. "It doesn't make any difference to me where I am, and—and," she concluded hesitatingly, and with an adorable shy glance, "I would much rather be with you. Take me to the Paddock, and show me Adare—do!"

"There is nothing in the world I should like better," he answered, looking as if he really meant what he said. "But I must keep my head cool until after the race is over ; and if——" gazing significantly at the girl, and stopping short with an air intended to convey that he dared not say all he thought.

"Yes," said Hetty encouragingly, "if what?"

"If I did as I liked I shouldn't have a chance against O'Hagan. The mere sight of you is enough to make a fellow forget everything else in the world. You see," and he pointed to the faded rose adorning his tight uniform, "I am wearing your button-hole. I told you that I would."

She blushed red with pleasure.

"Yes," she said, "I see ; but it's ridiculous having such a faded old thing as that—it spoils your appearance. Here, take this instead." And she began to unfasten a bunch of blue corn-flowers and white daisies, which she wore at her breast.

"No," he said, "let me keep to my rose—at any rate until the race is over. I have kissed it so often that it feels like a regular friend."

"How dreadfully foolish of you," said Hetty, in tones of mild reproof, whilst the colour deepened rather than faded on her smooth young cheek.

"As I go by the Stand," he went on, "I shall each time seek to distinguish the lovely face of my best and truest supporter. Will you look at me in return?"

"Yes," she whispered under her breath, wondering how it was that he had not already guessed she did not care to look at anybody else.

"That's right. You give me fortitude, and inspire a presentiment of victory, which otherwise I should never have entertained. And now I must be off to the Paddock again, for our race stands next on the list. Hetty, dear," and he lowered his voice persuasively, "you will give me your hand, won't you, and bid me good luck for the last time. So shall I go forth strong and full of courage."

She put her little gloved hand through the railings. It was the only way she could comply with his request, and even then she ran great danger of being seen, whilst he grasped it hard in his big and nervous fingers. The softened light played on her burnished hair and enhanced the fair delicate tint of her com-

plexion. Any man might have been forgiven for taking advantage of the situation.

"Hetty," he said softly, still detaining her hand in his, "do you know what I should like to win even better than this race?"

"No," she answered, with a vain effort at unconsciousness.

"Shall I—dare I—tell you?"

"Please yourself. If I were a big man, like somebody of my acquaintance, I should never use the word 'dare.' It does not suit him."

There was a sly impertinence, joined to a covert encouragement, about this speech which set his blood aflame.

"Mein Himmel! you are right. What I want to win—what I would give the world to win—is a fair English girl, beautiful as an angel, with eyes like a deep, still pool, hair that resembles threads of gold, and a mouth—well, a mouth made to be kissed. Now, are you angry?"

Hetty hesitated. The question was one which she found a great difficulty in answering truthfully.

"Are you angry?" he persisted. "At least put me out of suspense."

A wonderful smile lit up her face. A smile, full of witchery and tenderness, capable for the moment of putting all the amorous Karl's calculations to flight.

"Yes, I am angry, but not nearly as angry as I ought to be. It's very funny, isn't it?"

"Ach!" he exclaimed triumphantly. "How I wish I could kiss you. I've half a mind to pay the ten marks to come into the Stand on purpose."

"No, no," she cried out in alarm. "You must not do any such thing. Remember, three whole dinners. Remember the race, too. It is time to see after Adare."

"Donner und Blitzen! so it is. Good-bye, *Liebchen*. My heart sings just like a bird, and all thanks to you. To-day I shall surely win. Adieu."

So saying the mighty Karl strode off, leaving Hetty in a perfect whirlwind of excitement. What did he mean? What did he want? Oh, how she longed to be quiet and to think. Was this really a proposal? Had he, indeed, expressed a wish that she should be his wife? She almost thought so, but what between the ecstasy of their interview, and the surprise of it, she

could not positively recollect what had been said on either side. She only knew that she felt strangely and chaotically happy—ready to laugh with any one, even Lord Charles, just as a means of giving an outlet to her feelings. Of course Karl would win. How could a little insignificant imp of a creature like Mr. O'Hagan expect to beat the most splendid man, not only in all Germany, but in all the world? No wonder the Germans had conquered the French. Karl alone was sufficient to turn the scale in their favour. And he loved her! This splendid soldier of the gallant mien and great strong bearing. A wave of gratitude flooded her being. Her heart sang pæan after pæan of rapturous melody. It was too good to be true. She did not deserve such luck. What had she done to be so favoured? How bright the world seemed! How green the trees and blue the sky! Fancy her thinking the races dull! Why, she must have been out of her senses.

As she leant over the railings, heedless of everything but the great joy which possessed her being, several of the common men turned to look at the fair girl with the parted lips, the shining eyes and still rapt smile. She appeared to them as a vision of Beauty, so entrancing, that they believed her nearly allied to the Holy Saints they worshipped on a Sabbath. Could she be the Virgin Mary? they asked themselves.

Poor Virgin! A wide breach had been made in the fortress and quickly had the barb of love sped through the secret recesses of her maiden defences.

The truth was this. Herr Von Kessler's physical attractions fascinated Hetty's senses precisely in the same degree as Lord Charles repulsed them. The one man could not help being good-looking any more than the other could help being plain. A young girl, gifted with a sensitive and artistic temperament, but quite without knowledge of the world, is frequently led by the eye rather than by intrinsic worth. It takes a good deal of experience to find out intrinsic worth. As a rule it is modest and retiring, does not proclaim its virtues on the house-top, and thus frequently gets a bad start in the race, which cannot be made up till too late. Yet what is to be done? Nature is so varied, so complex, and she will have her way. For good or evil the universal Mother's ruling must be obeyed. If she had not chosen to make magnificent men and pretty, foolish little girls, Hetty's life might have been

very different. She might have settled down into a sweet but not too clever wife—just the sort of wife that suits nine men out of ten—and proved a placid, kindly mother to her children. But it was ordained otherwise.

As for Lord Charles, his ugliness repelled her, and she never paused to dwell on the numerous advantages offered by an alliance with him. She realized them feebly and vaguely, as things that applied to other people but not to herself. The luxuries of Murchiston Hall, its solid comforts and regular good eating, did not appeal to her spirit. She felt, or believed that she felt, it would be no privation to give them up at any moment.

It never occurred to her to dwell on the consequences almost certain to accrue if she yielded to the blandishments of her Teutonic admirer. She simply fell head over ears in love with him, without giving any grave considerations a thought. She *supposed* they would be very poor, and she *supposed* her parents would be very angry, but even if they had not quite enough to eat, she was quite sure they would be awfully happy.

And then something was certain to turn up. Either her parents might relent, or the Von Kesslers might allow them a little, or else Karl would obtain a more lucrative appointment. Anyway things would arrange themselves somehow. This is how Hetty reasoned—much, I imagine, as reason most country-bred girls at eighteen. In whatever manner the affair was destined to end, she was happy, radiantly happy for to-day.

The memory of this special afternoon would always be hers, to garner up through the years to come. No one could rob her of it, thank the good God. She had a dim notion that such heritages are rare in one's life, and therefore ought to be valued accordingly.

"Pardon me for leaving you so long alone," said Lord Charles' voice at her side. "Little as I like the woman, I was obliged to go and speak a few words to the Duchess of Bettinggirl. You have not been dull, have you?"

"Dull? Oh, dear no, not the least." And she raised her eyes to his and he saw a light in them which he had never seen hitherto.

"I am glad of that. I could not get away before, and I was afraid you might think the time seemed rather long."

"No, it didn't a bit. I have never in my life enjoyed myself so much as to-day."

His face flushed with pleasure. He was unconscious of the

real cause of her satisfaction, and man-like, thought it mainly attributable to himself.

"I'm delighted to hear it, and only hope you will continue to enjoy yourself to the end. At one time I fancied you seemed a little down in the mouth."

"Did I? It was the heat. Such very hot weather always knocks me up. But now it is charming," she said gaily.

"Yes, in the shade. It is very hot still in the sun. I went to the Paddock not so very long ago, and the heat was burning there."

"What do you think of the horses?" asked Hetty. "Have you seen Adare?"

"Yes, and although I suppose it's heresy to say so, I fancy he has a fair chance of winning."

"What!" she exclaimed, with mock incredulity. "In spite of his being handicapped by that great, clumsy German officer, who knows nothing of riding? You surprise me."

"Let me tell you this," he said earnestly. "I know a good deal about German officers, having been sent over to this country when a youngster for the express purpose of studying foreign languages, and I maintain the English make no greater mistake than to imagine that the Germans can't ride. Once let them witness a cavalry charge, and watch the nerve, the dash and precision with which it is conducted, and they would never display their own ignorance by repeating so insular a remark. Karl Von Kessler is a splendid horseman. I saw him ride here last year, and, although I don't particularly fancy the man, as a man, if Adare does not win, in common justice to his jockey, it won't be his fault."

Then and there Hetty forgave Lord Charles for having bored her. She appreciated the generosity capable of awarding merit to an adversary.

"You are almost the first English person whom I have heard say a good word for Herr Von Kessler," she said in a gratified voice.

Something in her tone at once aroused Lord Charles' suspicions. It was a sad pity that he could not leave well alone.

"Because I say the fellow can ride, it by no means follows that I admire his character as a man," he rejoined with more truth than tact.

"All the same, I have a strangely strong presentiment in favour of Adare," she replied, with a coquettish pout of her full, red lips.

"Why not be open and confess that your interest is centred in Adare's jockey?" rejoined Lord Charles, his face turning curiously white.

This unlucky speech aroused her indignation. What business had he to pry into her affairs? She would not stand it. No, not for a moment. Besides, to talk to her in this way was downright insulting. She got plenty of lectures at home. She did not want *him* to join in the chorus.

"Well!" she exclaimed defiantly. "Even if I do admire"—she called it admiration, not love—"the gentleman of whom we are speaking; what then?"

"Nothing, only I should feel sorry for you. Herr Von Kessler is scarcely an individual of immaculate character."

"Thank you," she said savagely. "You may keep your sorrow to yourself. It is quite wasted upon me."

"So it seems. There are none so blind as those who won't see."

"And there are none so rude as those who try to interfere with other people's business," she retorted vehemently.

"Take warning, Miss Davidson, before you allow yourself to slide into a profitless flirtation. You may think me presumptuous or not, as you like, but I know it for a fact that Herr Von Kessler is not a gentleman calculated to make the woman he marries happy."

"Really, Lord Charles, you are too good. Why this valuable, this disinterested advice to me? May I ask what is your reason for disliking our poor friend Karl so vindictively. I thought only women descended to jealousy, not men."

"I have a reason," he answered sullenly, "but it is not one I can tell you. You would not even understand it."

"Ah!" she cried triumphantly, "I thought so. Back-biters are always full of hints and innuendoes. They invariably deliver their thrusts in the dark. If I were you, Lord Charles," she went on, speaking with growing irritation, "I should scorn to take a man's character away behind his back. I call it a mean thing for any gentleman to do, and I for one decline to be the recipient of your tales. Tell them to somebody else if you like, but not to me."

She wondered afterwards how ever she got the courage to make such a speech, but she was thoroughly roused by what he had said, and deeply resented his remarks. They had left the Stand, the heat having partially moderated, and were once more walking towards the coach. In her abstraction, she had neglected to put up her parasol, and the sun shone full on her impassioned face. It would have sorely tried the beauty of any other woman, but it only heightened hers, by revealing the exquisite purity and fineness of her complexion, the liquid lights that found their home in her lustrous eyes, and the marvellous red-gold tints of her rippling hair. He looked at her and sighed. He could almost have wished that she were a trifle less innocent. It was impossible to explain things. Directly he tried to do so, he only put himself in the wrong, and lost the little leeway he flattered himself he had gained.

"I suppose you're downright savage now," he said disconsolately, after a tolerably prolonged pause.

She hesitated a little, and then said: "No, not if you don't offend again. Only of course it was not very pleasant for me to be talked to in that way."

He turned away his head to hide the vexation and mortification from which he suffered.

"What a beastly jealous fool I am to be sure!" he said to himself. "We have been getting on swimmingly all day, and now I'm regularly in her bad books, and just for saying a word against that rascally Von Kessler, d—n him. I wish her eyes were opened. And yet, no, why should I desire to instil evil into her mind? It will come fast enough of its own accord. Her innocence is adorable. It would be positively wicked to destroy it. If the little lamb really believes in her big Karl's virtue and unselfishness, let me be the last person to make her aware of the iniquity of the man."

This was a very magnanimous resolution to arrive at, but even whilst forming it, Lord Charles felt inward doubts as to how long he should be able to act up to it. He had never been in love before, and he had taken the malady very strongly.

"Why do you look so glum?" inquired Hetty, taking mercy on him after she considered he had been duly punished for his offence.

"Am I looking glum?" he said awkwardly.

"Yes, awfully. I never saw you with such a downcast air. You've no idea how it changes you. Come, be cheerful."

"I can't, except on one condition."

"What is that?"

"Your forgiveness."

"You have it already. Only don't you agree with me in thinking it rather mean of people to abuse others behind their backs?"

"I think," said Lord Charles fervently, "that you are an angel, only you don't know the world or the folks who live in it. And," he went on, "if your knowledge never increases, and your charity remains the same, so much the better for you, and so much the worse for brutes like myself; that's all!"

She did not quite understand him, but she saw that he was unhappy.

"You—you are not a brute," she said softly. And at the words his crushed spirits leapt up like quicksilver.

(To be continued.)

Angiolina la Fioraia.*

PART I.

NATURE has her favourites; it is one of the prerogatives of all those who have power, one of the luxuries of all autocrats; and Dame Nature, as Dame Fortune, being both autocratic ladies, have been able, the former to endow a child of the gutter with all the graces, charms and refinement of an aristocrat, besides great beauty, and the latter, acting as foster-mother to an orphan, to watch over her, and help her to bud and blossom into the glorious wonder of her eighteenth summer, in the midst of her surroundings of poverty, nay, of squalor.

Tall, perfectly modelled, with pure complexion as though of white lilies tinged with softest rose blush, commanding in her movements, and with all the supple grace of the willow, her raven hair neatly drawn away from her perfect forehead—the glossy well-brushed hair: such a treat to gaze on in an Italian woman of the people—she seems to defy by the pure classical outline of her features, all the petty efforts of the becurlings and befrizzlings of her less fortunate sisters; two little curls, almost as stiff as the *crève-cœurs* of the First Empire, are guarding each delicately-shaped ear. Dressed in true good taste, a simple foulard gown of perfect fit (who can have taught her this high art?). Such is *Angiolina la Fioraia*, as on a summer's evening, in the Public Gardens of Naples, she stands with quiet dignity, holding her little basket of *boutonnieres*, waiting, as a queen might await the homage of her courtiers, that the passers-by may ask for their flower, and drop their coins in return. She lifts her eyes and smiles to some special favourites. Ah! those windows of the soul do not show great *fuoco sacro* within, yet they are very beautiful in shape and colour, and the long black fringe veils them at times with a grace and modesty, which gives a halo of purity to this girl of the streets. Yes! her charm is infinite.

*Angiolina the Flower Girl.

Amongst the throng of admirers who come and go and form a pilgrimage of devotees at the shrine of her beauty, is one man, young, handsome, full of the fire of life, which is a little wanting in her. He does not, as the others, buy a flower and exchange words with her, but from a little distance watches silently, and with white gleaming teeth firmly, sufferingly set in the sensitive flesh of the under-lip. He watches, but even if he is a jealous husband of the south, he can find no fault with the dignity with which Angiolina receives her numerous admirers' advances. Respectable mothers sitting listening to the band playing in those picturesque gardens, let their eyes linger pleasantly on this graceful figure, as with placid smile she looks on their daughters; honest fathers of a family of limited means, to whom an entanglement of young Hopeful would mean utter ruin, look with indifference at their sons' flirtation with Angiolina. Amiable to all, she gives preference to none, and the least attempt at a liberty, is checked so mercilessly, that none would dare to repeat it.

And now two fine young cavalry officers of the heavy dragoons saunter up to her, and one of them with easy manner, in which, however, a certain amount of respect is visible, says as he and his companion choose their little rosebud :

"You see, fair Angiolina, we always come to you for our flower, although as good soldiers we ought not to wear any. Have you changed your mind?" he adds, "and will you not accept our little supper at the Grand Café?"

"Thank you, no; my *fidanzato* awaits me, to escort me home," glancing towards where the dark youth awaits her, with such loving, jealous eyes. To this there is no rejoinder; so after a few banal words the two men walk on, touching their *képi* to Angiolina, another mark of respect no other flower girl ever obtained. And then gradually the gay *réunions* break up, and the musicians play their last piece of the evening, and presently the *fidanzato* advances to walk home with his love.

Three months previously, Giorgio and Angiolina had as much in common as the leaves of yonder plane tree have with those of the dark-leaved magnolia, and which, nevertheless, by the caprice of the autumn winds, will presently come together and intermingle so closely on the sodden earth; Giorgio, a Sicilian sculptor, was still in his native provincial town, with no hope before him, when a kind friend and patron, recognizing his

genius, gave him on the faith of the same, the necessary 1,000 francs to come to some larger field of action. On arriving in Naples he became a close neighbour of Angiolina's, and the true artist's soul was soon attracted towards this exquisite model of classic beauty. She seemed to him as sacred as the little image of the Madonna, his mother gave him at parting, and it was with wondrous joy that he found himself one day her affianced husband.

To-night, as they go down some narrow little streets to reach their abodes, he, pressing her hand with fervour, says :

" Ah ! Angiolo *mio*, how long the time seems, waiting for you to be mine."

" But, Giorgio, we are so poor, we cannot marry yet," she sighs ; her heavenly smile and soft voice making even these cold, prudent words seem like water to the ears of the parched wanderer in the desert.

" But repeat to me, beloved one, that you love me and that when I am rich enough to have a little studio of my own, we shall be blessed and happy together."

" Certainly, dearest, the Holy Father hear me."

And so, down the narrow streets, narrower and narrower, to one, which, since the ravages of the cholera of 1884, has been thrown down, but which then (the year before) flourished in all the richness of its over-populated houses ; one fervent burning kiss from the lips of the lover, a velvet cheek touching his, and they part at the door of her apartment, a single room : two *trespiti*, three wooden planks placed across them, and on these a straw mattress, a poor attempt at blankets, no coverings ; a little deal table near the small window, where panes of glass have been replaced in several places by paper pasted up ; on the table a small broken looking-glass ; two wooden chairs which once were painted yellow, but which are now grey from long usage, and with corded seats (southern fashion), and broken through in several places : such is the interior to which this glorious Angiolina returns. There is a little cupboard which she opens, and takes out a bit of heavy doughy bread and a raw tomato, which she proceeds to eat, after having carefully removed her dress. Thus sitting at her solitary supper, she amuses herself watching her image reflected in the bit of looking-glass ; the beautiful pearly skin of her bare arms and shoulders gleams out even under the

poor light of her meagre petroleum lamp. First an expression of irony for a moment clouds her face ; she seems to say, What a place for *me* to be in ; yes, she knows her beauty and its value. Yet, even wishing to keep faithful to her love, she might surely live in better surroundings, for she earns many pretty pennies, but Angiolina only spends on what can give return, and spends as little as she can.

Her expression changes now, and one of triumph seems, for the first time since we have seen her, to light up her face to dazzling brilliancy ; can she be thinking of her lover ? Yet, when he gave her that ardent lingering kiss just now, she had not seemed to kindle from her wonted calm. Where are her thoughts ?

Chi lo sa !

PART II.

A WEEK has passed, and we again see Giorgio join Angiolina at the end of the evening campaign, her faithful escort.

To-night, joy, love triumphant glisten in his true, honest eyes as he goes up to her.

"*Beddicchia* mia*," he says, "fortune at last stops her wheel before me to mete out happiness for us both. The Marchese di Torre Grossa has ordered of me, in marble, a copy of the terracotta study of your bust, paying 5,000 francs for it, and besides has given me a further order for a large group of figures for a fountain in the garden of a pretty villa he has on the Riviera di Chiaia. My fortune is assured. Surely we can marry now, *amore ?*"

A little smile curves her exquisitely-shaped lips, as without apparent surprise she congratulates him.

The lover continues speaking of his unexpected good luck and says :

"My patron is so kind, so affable ; he kept me with him till nearly the *Ave Maria*, choosing the site for the fountain, etc. He must be past sixty, and is very plain and pitted with small-pox too ; but he seems such a *gran signore*. Perhaps you noticed him in the gardens this evening, for as I was coming here to fetch you, longing to tell you of our happiness, I met him just leaving the gardens as I was entering them."

* Sicilian term of endearment, meaning "pretty one."

The girl smiled her sweet seraphic smile, but did not say if she had noticed this kind and generous patron of her lover's art.

Next morning, Giorgio looked in at his *fidanzata's* room, to give her the usual daily lesson, for his love had wished to be educated, and truth to say, he had found an apt pupil. At first a look of surprise came to his expressive face as his usual tap remained unanswered. He tried the handle of the door, which gave way, and he found it untenanted. Soon astonishment gave way to fear. Yet no, he reasons, why should he be fearful? Are not all his love's worldly belongings there?—the little bright green painted box, the meagre hair-brush and comb, the single dress of relay hanging on the peg over the door. No, it is all right; Angiolina is only gone on some slight, trivial errand, and will return in a few moments.

He sits on one of the old broken chairs and waits. How timid he is growing for the beloved one, he laughingly thinks; yet how full of presentiments of evil is his heart! Folly! it is only that his nerves are unstrung by the great joy of his sudden good fortune. All night he has lain awake thinking of it, making plans for the happiness of his dearly-loved one. Once he slept for a short time, only to start up thinking Angiolina was lying by his side; yes, for now she will be his own, so soon, to love and cherish. And how he will cherish her and love her! He waits on, day-dreaming; then he draws a little case from his pocket—a plain gold ring with a glistening diamond. Yes, it was foolish to spend so much of his newly-won gains on this bauble for her, but then she will be so pleased, his Angiolina! But why does she not return? How long has he waited when the *padrona di casa* comes bustling in to him?

"Have you seen Angiolina?" he asks her.

"No," says the woman. "She is always in at this hour; the sun is scorching at this time, and she does not like to spoil her complexion by it."

He does not notice the irony of the woman's speech, but gazes at the sun rays as they filter through the remaining clear spaces of glass in that paper-bemended window. It must be high indeed in the heavens to penetrate even into that narrow *vico*. And still Angiolina does not return!

Giorgio's fears return, and as the hours of daylight creep on, a thousand doubts assail him. Can she have gone to the bathing

establishment down by the sea and been mercilessly swallowed up by the waters? But no; those cabins are safe enough, and the water is not deep in them. Perhaps she has been run over by those new tramways? Yet even Giorgio smiles at his fear, for Angiolina is no poor old weakly invalid, for such an accident to occur to her. Well, he will go out and see if he can meet her—inaction is intolerable.

Twilight comes, and worn out, tired and heartsick he gives up pacing the broiling streets in useless search, and hope again revives in him as he nears the home of Angiolina. He will find her there; she will be dressing for the evening's bread-winning, that bread-winning which is so distasteful to him, and which now will no longer (*grazie al cielo!*) be necessary. She will be putting on her best gown, and will greet him through the window with her usual, "*Ti saluto, Giorgio.*"

But no; Angiolina has not returned! Then he will go and wait at the gardens for her; she *will*—she *must* surely be there!

That evening the loungers wait in vain for their flowers and their smiles, and Giorgio waits in vain for his love. When the music stops and the gardens close, the pale, haggard face of the sculptor attracts the attention of a philanthropist, who inquires of him as he reels along the gardens:

"*Che vi sentite male?*"*

Giorgio pulls himself together and manages to thank the kind Samaritan, who, however, taking him for some poor, starving beggar, insists on leading him into a *bettola* and giving him some bread and wine, the first food he has seen to-day; he cannot swallow the bread, and after taking the wine with avidity, goes back home, home to despair. A never-ending night of misery, and when dawn comes he recommences pacing the streets; his vision dazed, his senses benumbed; he meets a friend, who barely recognizes him at first, but when told of his grief, suggests the *questura*.† Why, yes, of course, he ought to have thought of it before. But disappointment awaits him there, too; no news and little interest is awoken by his inquiries for the missing one. Justice forgets the even balance of the scales in her hand when the poor are in question, and she, represented by those lazy officials, does not see much hope of reward if the

* Do you feel ill?

† Police station.

flower girl is found ; and so they shrug their shoulders, and say they cannot help Giorgio for the present. At last the summer heat increasing, becomes so intense that his reason almost seems giving way. Angiolina is gone, and he cannot live without her ; *he must die*. How glorious to end this misery.

A revolver is soon bought ; he gazes on it with affection, for is it not the friend who will deliver him from further suffering ? This evening in the gardens it will give his soul freedom.

And his mother ? What is she doing now ? His sweet, patient mother, who had counted so certainly on her son's triumphs in the great city. Sitting quietly by her open doorstep in the little country house, where the family are gone to prepare for their small vintage, perhaps some chance acquaintance coming from the little town (Licata) will read the news of the suicide, and bring it to her. Poor mother ! but *bah !* he cannot live without Angiolina—without his beautiful Angiolina. She is surely dead, and he must join her.

Sunset, and Giorgio is still pacing up and down the burning pavements of the Riviera, his head bent forward on his chest. Two officers are walking just in front of him ; what did they say ? Angiolina ? What about her ? Suddenly his whole being is kindled into agitating life as he presses forward to catch their words.

"*Si mio caro*," one is saying to the other, "so it is. Torre Grossa can afford the luxury, for I believe he is very wealthy, and the fair beauty we all thought so simple and innocent, has made a good bargain of his infatuation for her charms, and has sold herself at a high price. But 'talk of the angels, one sees their wings ;' there is the lovely Angiolina going home from her drive," and he points to a victoria turning into the *portone* of a charming villa, in which a very beautiful woman is loling. The superb diamond earrings at her ears, catching the last rays of the setting sun, sparkle merrily. One gasp and the poor, dust-becovered, panting wretch is flying toward the carriage ; he reaches it as the woman he has so loved is just stepping out of it, her arm resting lightly on that of the respectful lacquey ; the marvellous adaptability of the Latin race, makes her already quite at ease in her changed position.

"Angiolina, Angiolina *mia*, I have looked for you for two whole days and at last I find you," says Giorgio, his mind, from

sheer bodily weakness, unable to grasp the details of her new surroundings and their meanings, only able to know he has found his love at last.

But with the calm smile he knows so well she passes on as if she knew him not.

Even then he cannot understand, and follows her up the wide marble staircase repeating :

"Angiolina, Angiolina, I am here. I, Giorgio, who has loved you so, who cannot live without you. Why did you leave me?"

The perspiration drops from his forehead and smears his face ; his trembling limbs barely sustain him.

She turns to the obsequious valet, who stands deferentially behind her, as Giorgio bars the stairway. "Turn off this drunken beggar," she says. The man succeeds in pushing him down two steps, and Giorgio half falls ; but he springs up, his Sicilian blood surging to his head at the insult, and giving him fictitious strength as he stands before her.

"A beggar! I? Angiolina!"

But the woman repeats her order, and the servant seizes him by the collar. Giorgio, with one desperate effort, throws him off, and laying hold of Angiolina's wrist,

"*Donna infame*," he hisses. Then the little weapon he has bought this morning for himself, is turned towards her and does its work of destruction, for with one shriek the woman falls forward shot through the heart.

"It is my turn now!" are his last words.

Another detonation ; their blood intermingles as it courses down the white marble steps.

United at last, in Death!

And the sun has sunk in the west, leaving a blood-red glow in the darkening heavens.

TINA.

A Romance of Modern London.

By CURTIS YORKE,

Author of "HUSH!" "THE MYSTERY OF BELGRAVE SQUARE," "THE BROWN PORTMANTEAU," "DUDLEY," "THE WILD RUTHVENS," "THAT LITTLE GIRL," etc., etc.

CHAPTER I.

ECLIPSE.

"I have known how sickness bends,
I have known how sorrow breaks,—
How quick hopes have sudden ends,
How the heart thinks till it aches
Of the smile of buried friends."

E. B. BROWNING.

"WHO lives in the stars, Douglas?" said a child's voice. "Do the angels?"

"Don't know, little one."

"Why, Douglas, I thought you knew everything?" and the tiny speaker raised two surprised, reproachful eyes to her companion's face.

The boy laughed—a short, amused laugh.

"You silly little thing," he said. "I know—just nothing at all."

"*Douglas!*" remonstrated the baby voice, "you do know lots of things."

Douglas shook his head.

"No, Bee, not the things I want to know. I mean to, though, some day," he added, with a curious quietness in his pleasant, boyish voice.

"When you're a man, Douglas?" asked the child.

"Yes, Bee, when I'm a man," the boy answered, leaning back in his chair and clasping his hands behind his head.

"Will it take years and years until you're a man?" asked the little one.

"It'll take a good many years," he answered briefly.

Bee smoothed out the skirts of a dilapidated and most viciously ugly doll which lay on her lap, and observed sagely :

"A year's a long time—an *awful* long time. Last year I was only a very little girl."

"And what are you this year?" said Douglas, pulling one of her curls with a good-natured smile.

"I'm six years old," she answered with an important air. "I'm getting quite a little woman. Mammy says so."

They were sitting at an open window which looked into a narrow dingy street near Westminster Abbey. The window was very high up, and the room to which it belonged was very small. But the window-sill was bright with late summer flowers, and the window-panes were exquisitely clean, which was more than could be said for the general run of window-panes in Garth Street. The room itself had an equally clean and fresh appearance—even a certain air of refinement. And the same air of refinement characterized the boy and his companion. He was a straight-limbed, well-made lad of fifteen; his face was kind and strong, with resolute lips, and keen, black-lashed blue eyes, which faced the world from beneath level brows too strongly marked for beauty. His child companion was a remarkably pretty little creature, with great grey eyes, and a tangle of curly brown hair—hair that floated about her tiny colourless face, and gave to it an added picturesque beauty.

Garth Street was unusually quiet and deserted on this particular evening. For one thing it was Sunday, and for another thing a fine small rain was falling, a wetting unpleasant rain, which made out-of-door locomotion undesirable. But Douglas and Bee did not mind the rain. They liked it. Douglas was letting it patter down at will upon his dark young head as he leaned over a fragrant tuft of mignonette, and every now and then Bee, kneeling upon her chair, stretched out her little neck, and put out her little red tongue as far as it would go, to catch the fast-falling drops, which, she declared, "tasted nice and warm."

The summer dusk fell softly, silently; the rain-drops grew lighter and fewer and finally ceased; a few stars twinkled out in the pale sky between the fast-drifting clouds.

Suddenly the door of the room opened and shut, and a woman's voice, low and clear, sounded through the semi-darkness.

"Don't sit at the open window, dears," it said; "the night air is damp and chilly."

Douglas rose instantly and closed the window. Then he put

his strong young arm round the slender figure of the newcomer. He was nearly as tall as she ; and there was a lingering likeness between the two faces, that were yet so essentially different.

"Are you better, mother darling?" he said in a voice of almost womanly tenderness. "Is the pain gone? Sit down in the easy chair and I will light the candles."

He struck a match and lit a couple of candles in tall, curiously chased brass candlesticks. Candles—in the plural—were a Sunday treat. On other nights they had only one.

The candlelight lit up the little room bravely enough. (If one's room is small, it manifestly takes less light to make it cheerful. Applied variously, this is one of the compensations of existence.) When the blind was drawn down, and the fringed chintz curtain pulled across the window, it looked a very homelike little room. There were one or two good engravings on the walls, a small, but well-filled bookcase in one corner, and, facing the window, a cottage piano of well-polished ebony, with a slender heap of music lying upon it. A mirror framed in dark oak hung over the mantelpiece, and above it a sword and a pair of spurs. A luxuriant, well cared-for heart's-tongue fern occupied the centre of the table.

Mrs. Conrath, the neighbours were wont to remark among themselves, had seen "better days." But they were not particularly interested in her. For though the pale-faced widow was always gentle and courteous to such of her fellow-lodgers as she came in contact with, she never showed any desire to improve their acquaintance. Nor did she respond to the kindly-meant advances of her landlady. She had lived for three years in Garth Street, and she had not made a single friend—which the inhabitants (being of a more clannish nature than is usual in London neighbourhoods) denounced as a sign of unwarrantable uppishness, and therefore left her alone. The boy, they added, was as "stuck-up" and "close" as his mother. Little Bee, however, was too young to be either stuck-up or close, and she often—when Douglas and his mother were out, and she was left to her own devices—wandered down to the kitchen, where she sat by the fire and "talked that knowin'," as Mrs. Dobbs, the landlady, said, as to impress that decent woman with the mournfully-announced conviction that "the blessed child was not long for this world—though as healthy and pretty as a pictur'."

Bee looked a bonnie and winsome wee sprite enough to-night as she nestled up to the tired-looking woman in the armchair, and wound her small soft arms about her neck.

"Poor, poor mammy," she cooed caressingly. "Douglas and me have been so good—and we spoke quite, quite low—so as not to wake you up."

Mrs. Conrath stroked the child's bright hair without speaking. She was still quite young, with a very sweet, but inexpressibly sad face. It was more than sad; it was utterly hopeless. All the hope, and nearly all the beauty, had been crushed out of it when she buried her soldier husband three years ago. And it had never come back again. Poor soul! she had had a sore struggle in these three years, and she had worked very hard. She had succeeded in keeping her son at a good London school until a year ago, when he had insisted upon earning something for himself. He was now office-boy to two easy-going young men, who had a couple of handsomely-furnished rooms in Westminster, where they wrote letters, smoked, and chaffed each other from ten till two, and resumed the same arduous programme from four till half-past five. This was on "busy" days. On other days they got into the office at eleven, and left it at two, to return no more. They paid young Conrath eight shillings a week, every penny of which munificent sum the lad scrupulously handed over to "the mother." Mrs. Conrath's life was bleak and dreary enough; but it would have been bleaker and drearier still without Douglas. He was old for his years, and singularly companionable; and in many ways he reminded her forcibly, sometimes almost painfully, of his dead father. There was something very touching in the boy's manner to his mother. It was a mixture of chivalrous tenderness and unspoken compassion. Only to Douglas did the widow ever speak of the husband who had been her idol; and many a passionate fit of tearless sobbing had been soothed to rest in Douglas's loving young arms. She, perhaps, did not realize the shadow her constant grief and melancholy shed around her boy's life. One is so apt, you know, to forget the depressing effect our indulgence in real or fancied troubles may have upon our house-mates. It would have been but a gloomy life for Douglas, much as he loved his mother, had it not been for little Bee's sunshiny presence. The sound of her tiny restless feet, her equally restless tongue, and her innocent

loving ways, were irresistibly winning and heart-cheering. Gloom was almost impossible where Bee was ; and she was as busy, in her inconsequent, baby way, as the indefatigable insect whose name she bore. She was not really a Conrath at all, though the mother and son could hardly have loved her more dearly if she had been. Her advent in the family was in this wise.

One snowy winter night four years ago Captain Conrath had found a tiny child, apparently about two years old, curled up in a weeping, half-frozen bundle on the steps of his club, and had been sorely perplexed and dismayed by the forlorn little atom seizing and clinging to his leg with all the tenacity of childish despair. He was about to relinquish her to the care of the grim-looking policeman who had promptly appeared upon the scene, when something in the child's tear-wet upturned eyes, some expression in the pathetic quivering baby lips, gave him an uncomfortable feeling in his throat, and made him sign to the policeman to pause. Such a tiny, forlorn, desolate little creature it looked—this little waif of the midnight and the snow ! And how its eyes, with their piteous upward look, recalled the eyes of his baby daughter, who lay peacefully under the frost and snow in a distant graveyard ! She had looked up at him like that—with childish eyes full of suffering—the night she died. Charlie Conrath was soft-hearted—foolishly so, his comrades said. Anyway, he couldn't bear to think of this poor mite being carried off to the police station until such time as her friends should discover her whereabouts. So, having failed to elicit anything except sobs from the poor shivering baby, he told the man to hail a hansom, picked up his weeping, snow-soaked protégée, and drove off with her to his home in Kensington Gore—leaving his name and address with the astonished policeman, in case inquiries should be made. But no inquiries ever were made ; and Edith Conrath welcomed the desolate waif with wistful tears, and took it into the place in her heart that death had left desolate, and called it by her dead baby's name. A year later tender-hearted, easy-going Charlie Conrath had followed his little daughter, and left his gentle young wife to face the world alone—except for the children. Except for the children ! God only knew what she would have done in these dark days except for "the children." Their innocent caresses, their loving childish attempts to soothe the grief they were too young to understand, saved her perhaps

from madness and despair. Though a singularly lovable fellow, Captain Conrath had also been almost incredibly thoughtless and careless of the future. He was hopelessly in debt, it was found, and it had never occurred to him, apparently, to make any provision for his family in the event of his death. So after the sale of most of the furniture in her pretty home, the young widow took rooms in obscure and dingy Garth Street, and went back to the life of hard work from which her handsome young soldier-lover had taken her thirteen years before—the monotonous, soul-withering, thankless, ill-paid work of teaching “other people’s children.” Yes—it had been a hard struggle; and something in her sunken eyes and worn cheeks told that it had been rendered harder by ill-health as well as poverty and care. For Edith Conrath was slowly but steadily sinking under the relentless grasp of a mortal disease. Her days were numbered, she knew. The grave that held her husband and child waited for her.

To-night she looked almost ghastly in the bright candlelight, for she had had a day of terrible pain, and she felt sorely unfit to begin her week-day duties on the morrow. Bee had perched herself on a stool behind her “mammy’s” chair, and was stroking the faded wavy hair with clumsily loving baby fingers. Mrs. Conrath caught one little hand in hers, as it strayed about her neck, and pressed her lips to it.

“Time you were in bed, my little one,” she said, glancing at the clock on the mantelpiece.

“No, mammy,” coaxingly replied the small maiden. “I’m not sleepy, and I haven’t had my bread and milk—nor I haven’t read about my little Samuel.”

“Here’s your bread and milk,” said Douglas, catching her up in his arms and carrying her over to the sideboard, where a cup of milk stood side by side with a slice of bread. “And when you’ve finished it, get your book, and you shall read to mother and me, like a clever little woman as you are.”

Having disposed of her supper, Bee went with an important air to a certain corner of the little bookcase, and produced a weighty and dilapidated volume, rich in many highly-coloured illustrations, principally of a Scriptural nature. She gravely turned over the leaves until she came to the picture she called “her little Samuel,” upon which she proceeded to dissertate at her own sweet will. Then, kneeling upon Douglas’s knee, with sweetly-

solemn face and tightly-shut eyes, she murmured an extremely conversational, not to say free and easy, little prayer—that nevertheless had something indefinably touching in its lisping petitions—and having bid good-night to Douglas, trotted into the adjoining room, whither Mrs. Conrath presently followed her.

Douglas seated himself near one of the candles and began to pore over a somewhat worn copy of "Plutarch's Lives." He was passionately fond of reading, and fortunately for him the late Captain Conrath's library, though small, was better selected than is altogether common in men of his profession. Douglas—like most resolute persevering natures—read very slowly, invariably uttering each word mentally as he passed it; and he possessed the accompanying faculty of remembering everything he read, as lightning skippers of literature rarely if ever do. When his mother came back into the room again he closed his book, and took a low seat beside her chair, caressing her hand silently.

"I think you are getting thinner, little mother," he said regretfully. "I really do. I wish to goodness I could earn a bigger screw, and then you wouldn't have to toil away at that miserable teaching day after day. I seem to be an awful while in growing up," he added with a sigh.

"My dear boy," his mother answered, smiling faintly—"you are growing up very fast, it seems to me. As for my teaching, why, I like it. It was all I had to depend on before I met—your father."

Her voice faltered. She never, even now, could speak of her husband without faltering speech and quivering lip. He had come like a glory of awakening sunshine into her dull sordid girlhood; and her faithful woman's heart cried out for him, not less, but more, as the years went on. It depends very much upon our surroundings whether time is the "great consoler" he is popularly supposed to be. There are griefs, not a few, that grow the bitterer for keeping.

"You cannot like it," resumed the boy almost fiercely. "And it makes me wretched—it drives me half-mad to see you going out in all weathers, looking so thin and ill—and I can do nothing to prevent it. In a year or two there will be an end of it, though," he added with a sudden compression of his young lips—"on that I'm determined."

"Yes, my boy—there will be an end of it—soon," was the quiet answer.

"What do you mean, mother? Why do you smile in that strange way?" asked Douglas in a startled voice.

"Dear—do you not understand?" she answered, passing her thin hand over his thick dark hair, and looking up at him with wistful eyes. "Do you not know that I am—very ill?—that I can never—be any better?"

"Mother!"

There was an anguished incredulity in the boy's voice and eyes as he flung himself on his knees and caught his mother's hands in his. She pressed them convulsively.

"Mother, you are mistaken. It can't be true," he said with a half break in his voice. "You will—you *must* get better! You remember how ill you were last year, and——"

"No, my boy, I shall not get better," she answered steadily. "You must not deceive yourself. I have wanted to speak to you of this—for a long time; but—I was afraid. I knew, dear, that you would—feel it so." And the sweet voice shook a little. Then she added, "I saw the doctor yesterday, and he says—that it is a question of—weeks."

The boy's face had grown very white.

"It can't be true!" he cried breathlessly and passionately. "You are so young, and sweet, and pretty! Oh, *mother!*"

He rose abruptly and went to the window, where he stood for a long time in silence, gazing out unseeingly into the night. No tears dimmed his eyes; a strong dull aching tugged at his heart. He had hardly been conscious until now how dearly he loved his mother. And somehow he had never thought of the possibility of her death. He had looked forward to coming years, when he should have compassed by his earnings a cosy, luxurious home for her—a home where he and she and "the little one" should live blissfully and peacefully—a home which should never know death, nor sorrow, nor care. And now?

A half-sob rose in his throat, but he choked it back.

"Why are we so poor?" his heart echoed fiercely. "Poverty and grief have killed her—and I can do nothing!"

He shut his hands in a kind of impotent despair.

Then his mother's voice called him back to her. He knelt beside her chair, and took her gently in his arms.

"Try to get well, darling," he whispered with an unruly catch in his voice. "It won't be so very long, please God, before I earn

enough for you to have good doctors and proper food and change of air. But oh, mother, mother"—the passionate young voice rang out despairingly—"don't talk of *dying*! Can nothing be done?"

Her eyes answered him.

He buried his face in her neck and sobbed.

Her tears fell fast too, as she held him more closely to her, and whispered loving, broken words that could not comfort him.

In a minute or two he checked his sobs with a violent effort, remembering how his grief would agitate her. For a time there was silence, broken only by the hurried breathing of each. Then she said:

"Douglas, can you bear to listen to me for a little, dear?"

He pressed her hand without speaking.

"It is about little Bee," she went on after a short pause. "Douglas, I feel it is laying a heavy burden on your shoulders, for she has no real claim upon you. But—your father was so fond of her—I cannot bear to think of the dear little one—— Oh, my dear, what will become of you both when I am gone?"

Her voice broke, and she turned away her face.

"Mother, don't worry about Bee," said the boy unsteadily. "I will take care of her. Trust me, dear. I can work for her and for myself too."

"No one knows she is not really your sister," went on his mother. "No one need know. She need not know either—at least, not yet."

"No, dear, what difference does it make? I love her just the same as if she were my sister," said the lad in a mechanical, far-away voice; for he could not think of Bee just then.

"Another thing," said Mrs. Conrath feverishly, after a minute, "I want you to promise me—to *swear* to me—that you will never accept a penny of your uncle's, of Evan Conrath's charity. He cut your father dead because he married me; he refused either to see him or speak to him; he returned his letters unopened. He wrote me a most cruel and insulting letter when your father died. You shall never be indebted to him—*never*!"

Her thin cheeks were crimson; her eyes glittered almost fiercely. Douglas felt that she was trembling from head to foot.

"You need not fear, mother," he said slowly. "I swear I never will."

His mother lay back in her chair, utterly exhausted by her brief excitement ; her lips were pale, her eyes closed.

Douglas felt a sudden vague alarm.

" Shall I get your medicine, dear ? " he whispered anxiously.

She made a gesture of assent, and by and by she sat up, and a faint tinge of colour came back to her lips.

" I will go to bed, I think," she said wearily.

Douglas helped her to her room, saw that she had all she wanted—as he did every night—then took her in his arms with a sorrowful still gentleness very unlike his usual boyish hug and good-night kiss.

" Good-night, my darling," murmured his mother brokenly. " My good loving boy. You have been more than a son to me, Douglas. God will surely bless you, and reward you as you deserve." Then she added wistfully, " Perhaps I have not acted as was best for you, my son. But I did it for the best. Always believe that, dear. Now, once more, good-night."

He kissed her hurriedly, for he could not trust himself to speak. Then he went up to his own bedroom, which was a small, low-ceiled apartment at the top of the house, and flung himself face downward upon his bed, trying to realize the crushing sorrow that had come upon him.

CHAPTER II.

THE SEED OF AMBITION.

" Face and figure of a child,—
Though too calm, you think, and tender,
For the childhood you would lend her.

Yet child-simple, undefiled,
Frank, obedient, waiting still
On the turnings of your will.

Moving light, as all young things,
As young birds, or early wheat
When the wind blows over it."

E. B. BROWNING.

MRS. CONRATH did not set out on her usual daily pilgrimage on the following morning. She could not. When Douglas went into her room according to his wont before leaving, even his inexperienced eyes saw that she was very ill. She would not

allow him to send for the doctor; she would be better in the afternoon, she said.

Her son got through his duties that day with a heavy heart, and hurried home to Garth Street with all possible speed. It was a dull, cheerless day, and a strange insurmountable depression weighed upon him. Bee met him at the head of the stairs, her small face scared and white. Behind her stood the landlady, Mrs. Dobbs.

"Oh, Master Conrath," said the latter, lifting her apron to her eyes, "I was just agoin' to send for you. Your poor ma was took that bad just after you went out, and we sent for the doctor, and ——" Here she stopped and dried her eyes anew.

"Is she—dead?" articulated the boy hoarsely, leaning against the wall, and feeling sick and giddy.

"No, Master Conrath, she is not dead; but the doctor he do say she can't last the night." And the speaker shook her head mournfully.

Douglas mechanically put her aside, and went into his mother's room. She was lying quite still, and her eyes were closed, her face ghastly pale.

"Mother!" he uttered despairingly, flinging himself on his knees by the bedside.

She opened her eyes, and laid her hand caressingly on his head. But she seemed too weak for speech.

Little Bee, with round, awe-struck eyes, climbed upon the bed. Dying! The word conveyed no meaning to her childish mind.

After a minute or two, Douglas, with a white, terrible look of misery on his young face, rose and went out. When he returned the doctor was with him. But alas! there was nothing more that medical skill could do. Another fierce attack of almost unbearable agony, and then the patient fell into a deep sleep, and from that sleep she awoke—not in this world, but another.

* * * * *

Little Bee wept, as children weep for a crossed will or a broken toy.

"Oh, mammy—I want mammy," she wailed.

But her baby-heart was consoled by the kitten from next door, which stole in and executed such wild fantastic gambols that Bee laughed merrily, while yet the tears stood in her eyes.

But Douglas did not weep. He sat, half-stunned, by the dead

woman's bedside, almost as white and still as she, with set teeth, and convulsively clenched fingers. He fiercely motioned away the fussy little doctor, with his soothing platitudes—"That it must have come sooner or later; that his dear mother had been in a critical state for a very long time; that she had been mercifully spared further suffering," etc., etc.

"I wish you would let me alone," the boy said in a strange, hard voice. "I know all that. I want to be alone."

And all night he sat there, pressing despairing kisses on the cold forehead, murmuring loving words to the deaf ears, feeling all the while that this was some unreal ghastly dream from which he must soon awake, and over which he and his mother would smile together in the morning. He kept murmuring this just above his breath, over and over again, to assure himself of the truth of his sad self-deception.

Mrs. Dobbs, who came up first thing in the morning—for she was a kind soul—to persuade him to have a cup of tea, declared it gave her "the creeps" to hear him.

Ah, well, there is no need to dwell upon those sad days. Soon—cruelly soon it seemed to Douglas—they took his mother away and laid her beside her dead husband. Bee, from the high window where the musk and mignonette bloomed fragrantly, watched the sad little procession wind its way slowly down the rain-washed street. Then she cried bitterly, and no one, not even the kitten, could pacify her—realizing for the first time that her "mammy" had indeed gone away from her, gone away in some strange fashion that held unknown depths of possible loneliness. And Mrs. Dobbs came and took her down to the kitchen, where she remained sadly enough until Douglas came back from the cemetery.

But when Douglas did come back he went straight to the room that had been his mother's (what a sad conjugation "had been" can be!) and shut himself in there for many hours. And in these hours he left his boyhood behind him for ever. As he lay there with his young heart full of a fierce tearing agony, it seemed to him that his life had come to an end.

The room grew darker, an awful silence throbbed through the air, and seemed to beat in the boy's ears more loudly than any sound. Gradually a pale moon shone in through the uncurtained window, and fell across the bed. The broad silver beam looked

weirdly bright, and gave to the surrounding gloom an added desolation. It fell across the pillow just where her dear head had lain so short a time ago. He pressed his lips upon the shining whiteness.

A muffled knocking at the door.

Douglas took no notice. Then the handle rattled noisily, and a pleading pathetic little voice cried sobbingly :

"Let me in, Douglas."

Douglas rose, and unlocked the door, whereupon Bee entered, a tiny white-robed figure ready for bed. Her brother (she knew him only as her brother) sat down again by the bed, and leaned his head on his hand.

"Douglas, Douglas," said the quivering baby lips, "I want mammy. Where is she?"

Receiving no answer, she climbed upon his knee and wept ; and he laid his head down silently upon her soft brown curls.

"Hush!" he said brokenly at last. "Mammy has gone away, Bee darling, never to come back again. But you must not cry, for she is very happy and will never have any more pain, nor anything to vex her."

The little one raised her tear-wet eyes to his.

"Can't we go too, Douglas?" she sobbed. "I want to go where mammy is."

Douglas gathered the tiny creature into his arms, feeling that something dear and sacred was still left to him.

"No, no, my wee one," he said, turning very white. "You would not like to leave me all alone, would you?"

"But you could come too," wept the child. "Mammy will be lonely without us."

The other made no answer to that sad plea. Which of us have not wondered in passionate incredulity if it can be possible that our "loved and lost," knowing our bitter grief and loneliness for the loss of them, shall not grow sad for a brief space, even amid the joys of Paradise? And so Douglas's heavy heart wondered—wondered bitterly.

The moon shone in brightly, steadily, lighting up the two sad young faces, and bathing the whole room in clear silver radiance.

"Don't cry, Douglas," Bee whispered, her own tears dried in sudden awe at the unwonted sight of his. "We will say our prayers, and perhaps God will bring her back again."

"No, dear," he made answer, clasping her very close to him ; "God will not bring her back again."

"Why?" said the child, with piteous quivering lip. "Is He not so kind as you and mammy thought He was?"

"Oh, Bee, hush, my dear," he broke out with a half cry.

The little one's words lit up with a sudden flash the darkness of his own rebellious thoughts. What are our first thoughts in the new, strange desolation of some crushing, unlooked-for sorrow? Not characterized by devoutness or resignation always—are they? Under the agony of the surgeon's knife we are apt to lose sight of the kind, unerring wisdom of the surgeon himself. That knowledge comes afterwards.

"Perhaps, Douglas dear," said Bee, with gravely knitted brows, "perhaps God thought mammy would rather be with father than with you and me."

"Yes, dear—perhaps," he answered almost inaudibly.

Neither spoke for some time after that, and when at last Douglas bent to look down into the child's face he saw that she had fallen asleep. Still holding her tightly within his arm, he let his head fall wearily forward upon the bed and lay quite still, for he was worn out with grief and fasting, and he felt curiously weak and sick. And gradually sleep came to him too—for a little while his sorrow was forgotten.

* * * * *

A few days after Mrs. Conrath's funeral, Douglas's employers—Debenham and Carslake, the firm was called, by the way—thought fit to raise his salary considerably. One of them, Debenham, was a singularly, almost Quixotically, kind-hearted young fellow, much quieter and more thoughtful than his rollicking companion. He was interested in Douglas, and pleased by the lad's respectful manners, and careful performance of his duties.

"And you know," he languidly remarked one day to Carslake—"it's deuced hard lines on the poor little beggar, having to support his baby sister as well as himself; and dash it all, you know, out of eight shillings a week it simply can't be done."

Therefore the prospect of starvation which had loomed grimly before Douglas Conrath and his young charge was, for the time, averted. They moved up yet another stair at Mrs. Dobbs's, and occupied as sitting-room a square light attic next to Douglas's

tiny bedroom. Bee was promoted to a still more box-like apartment opening off the sitting-room.

It was hard for the boy to part with his mother's few cherished pieces of furniture; but he set himself to it stoically, and as a duty. One or two things he kept—things of little value, but too sacred for the hands of strangers. The rest had to go. And so he and "the little one" began life again, as it were—life with a difference.

Thus two months passed away.

The children of the poor—especially the poor who have once been otherwise—are apt to leave their childhood swiftly behind them. Douglas, as I have said, was old for his years. Bee was rapidly becoming old for hers. Old-fashioned—according to Mrs. Dobbs—she had always been. But it was a quaint, lovable old-fashionedness—a womanly childishness or a childish womanliness—that endeared her to Douglas's heart more and more. She was growing fast, and might easily have been taken for a child of eight. Indeed she might have been eight for all Douglas knew; for of course all surmises as to her exact age were mere guess-work. Her great ambition was to be Douglas's housekeeper, and it was touching to watch her efforts in this line.

"Am I of use to you, Douglas, my dear?" she used to whisper every night after their frugal evening meal, as she climbed upon his knee. "Could you not do without me?"

And he always answered:

"No, my little Bee—I could not indeed."

One of her latest and most prized accomplishments was that she could pour out Douglas's tea. True, upon one occasion she had let the teapot fall, and broken a tea-cup thereby—not to mention scalding her poor little hand and arm rather badly—which *fiasco* resulted in Douglas performing this part of his housekeeping himself for the next few nights. But by dint of coaxing and piteous entreaties and assurances that she would be very, *very* careful, she once more perched nightly behind the tea-tray, and beamed there in happy content. Poor little woman, how much in earnest she was, to be sure!—how impatient to be grown up!—how anxious to perform all her duties exactly as "Mammy" had done. She got up surprisingly early, and having washed and dressed with laborious care, finally went to Douglas to have her frock fastened. Then she went in search of Mrs.

Dobbs, and followed her about persistently, carefully observing all she did, and asking so many questions that Mrs. Dobbs's patience sometimes gave way. If the latter happened to be in a good temper, she allowed Bee to make toast, and carry it upstairs afterwards. If she were not in a good temper—which happened occasionally—the young folks in the attics ate their bread untoasted.

When the little housekeeper had given Douglas his tea, and finished her own bread and milk, she trotted downstairs for his boots. Then having stood upon a chair to carefully brush every speck of dust from his clothes, she went hand-in-hand with him downstairs to the door, where she stood kissing her hand until he was quite out of sight. Bee—by special arrangement—had dinner with Mrs. Dobbs. Douglas did not come home at his dinner-hour, for the simple reason that a twopenny pie or a couple of sausage-rolls were all he had margin to afford himself in the way of dinner. But he was always home shortly after six, when Bee—unless it were wet—was already dressed in her hat and jacket, to go for a short walk. Then they came back and had tea; and afterwards Douglas taught her a little reading and spelling—for she was very anxious to learn to read—to read in books “with no pictures,” as she gravely informed him. When she had gone to bed in her tiny box-like room, with the door left open that she might see the light of Douglas's candle, the boy wrote steadily until far into the night. This home-work, which had been procured for him by Mr. Debenham, consisted in the copying out of various crabbed old manuscripts of which the meaning was generally obscure and the length apparently never-ending. At least so it appeared to the young scribe. However, the remuneration, though of course very small, formed a very welcome addition to his weekly earnings.

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It was now nearly Christmas. December snow lay thick in Garth Street. December winds whistled through the well-ventilated attics occupied by the young Conraths. There were no evening walks for Bee now; for when Douglas came home it was quite dark and the street lamps were lighted. But there was always a tiny figure seated on the top step of the stairs, a figure that sprang up joyfully as the beloved step came swiftly upwards and the beloved voice sounded through the darkness. The

weather was bitterly cold now, and Douglas had—somewhat diffidently—requested Mrs. Dobbs to have a bright little fire burning all day in his draughty sitting-room, for Bee had had a cold lately, and he had gently forbidden her to run up and down the still more draughty stairs. On this fire, Douglas every night and morning boiled the water in a tiny kettle, and made the tea himself, while his little sister looked on gravely, with a view to doing it herself when she should be a “little bigger.” How happy and contented the child was on these mornings and evenings! The days, to be sure, were long and dreary enough, even with the companionship of her doll and the kitten. But the evenings when Douglas and she sat by the fire and told each other stories, or sometimes (rare treat!) roasted an apple, or played at wonderful and absorbing games—which ruthless bedtime interrupted all too soon—these evenings seemed to little Bee like Heaven.

One wild snowy night, a few days before Christmas, Douglas was much later in coming home than usual—indeed it was past seven when he ran up the worn, narrow steps of No. 13, Garth Street, and prepared to knock at the door. But to his surprise the door was open and the snow was drifting in. He closed it, shook the clinging snow from his serge jacket and went upstairs.

No little voice and figure welcomed him. His slippers, as usual, lay warming in the fender; but the fire had burnt low—and all was silent.

“Bee,” he called out cheerily. “Why—where are you, little woman?”

No answer came, however; and having looked into her room to make sure she was not there, he, supposing her to be with Mrs. Dobbs, made up the fire and went to his own room to wash his face and hands and brush his hair before tea. This done, he went back into the sitting-room. It looked strangely desolate, he thought, without the busy little figure.

When he had boiled the water and made the tea, and there was still no sign of “the little one,” he began to feel vaguely uneasy, and ran downstairs to the basement, where he found Mrs. Dobbs, looking crimsonly taciturn—for it had been washing-day. To the boy’s inquiries for his little sister, she curtly replied that she had not seen the child since she—Mrs. Dobbs—took up the tea-things nearly two hours ago.

Douglas felt as if a cold hand had suddenly clutched his heart. Could she have gone out? Surely not. Then where could she be? None of the other lodgers had seen her, they replied to the boy's distracted questionings. She was in none of the rooms, high or low. She had disappeared.

In an agony of anxiety Douglas seized his cap, and rushed out into the street.

"Bee!—Bee!" he called aloud.

But the snowy wind caught his words and drowned them. He paused under a swirling gas-lamp—uncertain which way to turn, full of miserable, bewildered forebodings. Was everything to be taken from him? the poor boy thought fiercely and wretchedly. Was he to lose Bee too? He tore down the street, hardly knowing where he went, or what he was doing. The snow swept across his face, half blinding him; the wind carried his cap away into the darkness, but he paid no heed.

Suddenly a shrill little cry smote his ears. He stood still to listen. Swift pattering footsteps sounded on the almost deserted pavement, and the next minute a tiny, drenched, forlorn-looking figure flung itself upon him, shrieking sobbingly:

"Douglas, Douglas! Oh, Douglas—I've got you—I've got you!"

Douglas just stooped and lifted her up in his arms, and hurried silently back to the house. The passionate relief of feeling the dear little arms round his neck, of hearing the sweet baby-voice in his ears, was too great for speech. He felt he simply could not have uttered a word without bursting into tears.

"Oh, Douglas!" Bee wept as she hugged him tighter and closer—"I did think you were never coming back—and I went out to find you."

Half an hour later, when the little culprit, warm and dry and beaming, and wrapped in a blanket, was enjoying her bread and milk while seated on Douglas's knee, he said somewhat severely:

"Now, remember, Bee, if you ever go out alone at night again, I shall be very, very angry, and very likely won't love you. I thought you were lost."

"Well—I thought you was lost," protested the child, with a piteous quiver of the lips.

"Boys never get lost," was the calm answer. "And if I had been—do you suppose you could have found me, you silly little thing?"

"But I *did* find you!" was the triumphant answer.

"No, you didn't. I came home and found no nice little sister waiting for me—and had to go out again in the snow and cold—all because you were a naughty girl."

Upon this the truant wept, and promised, and was forgiven.

After tea she sat demurely upon a little stool, still wrapped up in the blanket, looking with earnest eyes and puckered forehead, into the fire. Then she said suddenly:

"Once I was lost another time, Douglas."

"Oh, no, you weren't, dear," Douglas answered absently. He was toiling through a tattered French grammar—and its idioms puzzled him, as they have puzzled older and wiser heads.

"Yes," went on the child, rising and coming towards him with the blanket trailing on the floor behind her—"once I was lost another time—in the snow. But I can't 'member properly."

She knitted her small brows again, and Douglas, suddenly recalling the incident of his father's finding her, took her on his knee again. He had often wondered as to her birth and her real name, and had secretly made up his mind, long ago, that she was the lost daughter of some nobleman. He had never heard his mother say how the child was dressed on that memorable night, nor if she had on any necklace, or sleeve fasteners, or other of the ornaments which he vaguely supposed a lost babe of noble birth might wear. And to-night he resolved to do what, as yet, he had not been able to summon up courage to do—namely, to look over his dear mother's desk, papers, etc. He might find some clue there.

"Try to remember, Bee," he said after a long pause, during which she had ruffled up his dark hair in loving fashion, and affectionately and carefully smoothed his thick dark eyebrows.

But Bee had lost the fleeting recollection.

"Can't 'member," she answered, wetting her tiny forefinger in an absorbed way, and continuing her attentions to his eyebrows.

"Too wee to 'member."

When she had gone to bed, Douglas brought out his mother's desk, unlocked it, and then sat quite still for a long time. The faint sweet perfume that lingered among the letters and papers there brought his mother's image to his mind so sharply and vividly that he uttered a half-choked cry and hid his face in his hands. When at last with reverent fingers he lifted out the con-

tents, his dark lashes were heavy with tears. First, came a bundle of letters—evidently much read—tied with a pale maize-coloured ribbon, bearing the words "Charlie's letters." Douglas laid them gently aside. Then came various little note-books, another and larger note-book (which appeared to be a kind of diary) and the certificate of his own birth together with that of his mother's marriage. There were a few loose letters, a bundle of receipts, one or two dry brown flowers wrapped carefully in tissue paper. And there was a piece of dark brown hair. Douglas knew it was his father's. But there were no trinkets of any kind—nothing that might have belonged to little Bee.

At the very bottom of the desk lay a thick creamy envelope with an imposing blood-red crest. It was addressed in a bold peculiar hand to Mrs. Charles Conrath—and, without knowing exactly why he did so, Douglas opened it.

It was dated shortly after Captain Conrath's death, and ran thus:—

"MADAM,

"I have seen in this morning's *Times* the announcement of the death of your husband—and my only brother—Charles Conrath. As he was always a young fool in money-matters (and in many other ways) I suppose he has left you penniless. You will therefore, I imagine, resume the work from which your marriage with him emancipated you. I write to offer to take my brother's son from your care, when I shall do my best to give him the manners—as he shall have the education—of a gentleman. Pardon me if I make the express and rigid stipulation that all communication between you and him, personally or by letter, must henceforward cease. He will be dead to you, as you will be dead to him. Should you refuse to accede to these terms I shall wash my hands of the lad and his prospects now and for ever. I shall send for him on Thursday morning.

"I remain,

"Madam,

"Yours truly,

"EVAN V. CONRATH."

Douglas sat gazing at this cruel epistle as if fascinated. He read it again, and yet again. His boyish soul rose in hot revolt at the deliberately insulting words; his whole being quivered

with fierce resentment. Could the writer of that letter be the brother of his tender-hearted, sweet-natured father? the boy wondered passionately. He sprang to his feet, pushed aside his chair, and paced with quick, uneven steps up and down the little room. Wild projects of compelling fame and fortune whirled through his excited brain. He saw himself wealthy, famous, world-renowned, despising the overtures—nay, refusing the acquaintanceship—of Evan Conrath and all his tribe. He saw himself looking back upon this night as the turning-point in his life. He saw—ah, me! he saw the visions we have all seen *once*!—visions that for the most part fade and die like the “baseless fabrics” they are.

How this giddy height of satisfied ambition was to be attained was to him as yet a dim and hazy cloud of meteoric, half-shaped ideas and projects. But with health and youth and grim determination surely all things would be easy; he would prove to this arrogant, heartless kinsman of his that “the manners and education of a gentleman” might be attainable without his assistance. Evan Conrath should yet be proud of the nephew he had so gratuitously washed his hands of. And so on, and so on.

Then, all too soon, came the inevitable reaction. How was he—a struggling, poverty-stricken office-boy, with no likelihood of any future situation more lucrative than some miserable clerkship at a hundred, or at most a hundred and fifty pounds a year—how was it possible for him to rise above mediocrity? It was *not* possible.

He flung himself into his chair again, and sat staring moodily at the fast-blackening fire. How dreary and sordid it looked! How dreary and sordid the whole room looked in the dim half-light shed by the guttering candle! Dreariness and sordidness and obscurity—poverty-stricken obscurity—that was to be his life, his and Bee's, until they were old—until they died. A wave of inexpressible desolation swept over him—a leaden weight of that intolerable depression with which we have all, or most of us, at some time or other been familiar; which at the time seems so never-ending, so hopeless, under the influence of which thousands of men, and women too, have committed suicide, not realizing that it is a state of mind partly due to physical causes acting, it may be—or may not—on some mental disturbance, and may lift in a day or an hour, independent of surrounding circumstances.

"Big Ben's" deep voice boomed out the hour of midnight. That sounded dreary too, the boy thought listlessly—like a knell. In the weird hush that followed he could hear the soft sweep of the snow against the windows, and the subdued wailing murmur of the wind. With a heavy sigh he roused himself, and mechanically replaced the things in his mother's desk, locked it, and put it away. Then he laid his head down on his arms and sobbed bitterly. He was not a sentimental lad, nor easily moved to tears; but just then he longed, with a wild, impotent longing that would not be silenced, for the voice, the touch, the loving smile of his dead mother.

The cold embers in the grate fell with a crash, the wick of the candle grew long and ragged, strange shadows flickered on the walls, and from the doorway of the inner room a small white figure glided out and stood at the boy's elbow. She did not ask why he wept; she did not speak at all; she simply climbed upon his knee, put her little arms round his neck, and laid her soft face, warm and rosy from sleep, caressingly against his, murmuring to him the while in an inarticulate, crooning way, to show her sympathy.

Somehow she comforted him; the bitterness was lightened somewhat; his heart and hopes rose again. He felt a curious sense of companionship in the clinging clasp of her arms, the light touch of her baby lips, as he had felt once before on that sad day when his mother was buried. His heavy sobs ceased, and Bee took out his handkerchief and gently dried his eyes. Then she whispered:

"Bee loves you. Bee will always be good, and be a little housekeeper. Bee will be the very same as mammy."

She had a funny little way sometimes of speaking of herself in the third person. Douglas liked to hear it. He kissed the curly head and murmured gently:

"Dear little thing—dear little child."

Then, fearful lest she should take cold, he carried her to bed and sat beside her until she fell asleep. His depression had gone; he felt strong again, and once more capable of defying the world, though in less tempestuous fashion.

A solitary star shone into the room; its pure, pale light seemed to beckon him away from despair and failure. Some words of Longfellow's floated through his mind—hackneyed

words enough, but they held a strange insistent significance for him just then. (And after all it is the hackneyed words that are sweetest and truest—else why *are* they hackneyed? Favourite paths are most footworn.) He repeated them softly under his breath:

“O star of strength! I see thee stand
And smile upon my pain;
Thou beckonest with thy mailed hand,
And I am strong again.

The star of the unconquered will,
He rises in my breast,
Serene and resolute and still
And calm and self-possessed.”

He could not remember any more; but he said these two verses over and over again with a growing sense of self-reliance and hope. When at last he went to bed, he lay awake until far into the morning, and his resolves took shape and form, and became tangible, living things. When towards dawn he fell asleep, he had a strangely vivid dream.

He thought he stood with little Bee in a dark dreary valley where no sunbeam could penetrate, and where the waves of a black, sullen-looking lake washed their very feet. The tide seemed to swell every moment; a melancholy wind shivered and moaned over its surface. The space where they stood grew smaller and more insecure. There seemed no way of escape. Behind them, the rapidly-advancing flood; before them, a sheer frowning cliff, whose top seemed almost in the clouds. Its hard, cruel surface held no faintest semblance of a path; not even a bush could be seen as a possible friendly foothold. But far, far up—away in the distance near the sky—was one tiny green spot where the sun shone. Douglas looked round him wildly and despairingly. It seemed to grow darker in the valley; a cold rain had begun to fall. Bee seemed to be unaware of their danger. She was sitting with her little old doll clasped to her breast, humming a contented, wordless song. The water covered her tiny feet, but she only laughed delightedly. Soon it covered Douglas's feet too. He stooped and lifted Bee in his arms, and she curled round his neck, whispering foolish, caressing baby talk in his ears. Then all at once he saw that the face of the rock was not so smooth as he had at first imagined. Here and there, immediately above him, little narrow pointed ledges

ran out; further up they seemed less narrow and shelving. But ah!—the space was far between them; and how was it possible that he could gain even these nearest to him, with Bee in his arms?

The water came up to his knees.

He set his teeth, and bidding the child cling firmly to his neck, swung himself slowly and painfully to the lowest ledge. But he might not rest there. The next ledge was gained, and then the next. He stopped to take breath, flinging his arm round a sharp projecting peak to steady himself. His heart leapt into his mouth then, for Bee's hands suddenly slipped from his neck, and it was only by the quick, convulsive clasp of his left arm that he saved her from falling into the inky waters below. Then he toiled on. Another ledge was gained; but the next seemed to afford no hold for his stiff and bleeding fingers. He held the child to his heart, and trembling in every limb leaned panting against the face of the cliff. The wind had risen; its strong blast seemed to choke him. They were far above the lake now, but he dared not look down, his head felt so light and giddy. Suddenly he became conscious that his arms were empty. Little Bee was gone. Far above him he heard her voice in shrieks of baby glee. With a superhuman effort he caught the slippery ledge and swung himself upward, then caught at a higher ledge still. On, on, with an ease and steadiness that surprised himself even in his dream, until he reached a rough shelving plain, which had been invisible from the valley below. Great rocks met him at every turn, but he climbed over them, climbed round them, passed them somehow. Now he found himself on the brink of a wide, yawning, impassable chasm, on the other side of which shone the far-away sunshine. He could still hear Bee's laughter, but only faintly. With a heavy heart, but undiminished purpose, he climbed down the ghastly precipice. The descent was long and painful, but he reached the bottom at last, and began the ascent of the other side. Half-way up he slipped and nearly fell, but a strong invisible hand caught his, and led him onward and upwards, a clear, ringing voice cried out triumphantly:

"To conquer fame and fortune!"

With the words still beating through his brain he awoke and sprang from his bed. It was morning, and the winter sun was shining into the room.

(To be continued.)